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Information for patients and carers

A Guide to a Full Thickness Skin Graft

Excellent care with compassion

Division of Surgery - Plastic Surgery and Burns Facility

@LancsHospitals

Why?

People need to have a skin graft for a variety of reasons, such as:

- Skin loss due to trauma/accidents
- To replace skin after removal of skin growths

How?

The Surgeon will remove a very thin piece of skin, from an unaffected area on the body, often the neck, and groin or in front of the ear, but any area of good skin can be used. The procedure will be carried out in theatre. The procedure can either be carried out while you are asleep under a general anaesthetic or with a local anaesthetic which is injected around the area which is to be operated on.

Management

The graft will be stitched, stapled or glued in place, often with a sponge dressing over the graft. Occasionally on the face, the graft may be stitched in place but left without a dressing, antibiotic cream may be applied. If this is the case we will supply you with the cream (the cream is an eye ointment) along with instructions of how to apply it. Your wound will be reviewed between 5-7 days in the Nurse Led Dressing Clinic which is located near ward 4. Please do NOT remove your dressings yourself unless otherwise instructed by the health professionals.

You may have to stay in hospital until after the first inspection of your skin graft, this depends where it is. If this is necessary, when you are discharged from hospital, arrangements will be made for review of you graft with a health care professional. This will usually take place in the Nurse Led Dressing Clinic near to Ward 4.

Care of your Graft

To allow your graft time to heal, it is important to keep the area protected from any undue pressure and minimise any movement of the affected area. It is also important to keep the area clean and dry, unless otherwise instructed by a health care professional. Please see below specific instruction by graft location:

Graft to arm or hand: you will need to keep the area elevated using a sling or by placing the arm / hand on pillows when sat in a chair.

Graft to face or head: ensure you do NOT lie down flat, so you will need to sleep/sit upright supported by pillows. Try not to bend forward as this can increase bleeding to the area.

Graft to leg or foot: it is important to limit the amount of walking you do. When sitting you need to elevate the leg to reduce any swelling.

What to expect when you first see your skin graft

Initially your skin graft may be a variety of colours from white to very dark red, but eventually the graft site will resemble your natural skin tone, though there may always be a slight difference from the graft site to the surrounding skin. If you have had some form of skin lesion removed, there may be a hollow in the area where there has been a skin graft. This may look quite unattractive when the first dressing is changed, but the hollow will gradually fill out over a period of months and the final result may not be quite as noticeable.

Donor Site

The area of skin taken for the graft is called a donor site. You will have had a full thickness skin graft which means that the Surgeon was able to close the donor site with sutures. You will have a single line scar usually in the neck area, groin or occasionally in front or behind the ear. Sutures may be dissolvable or may need to be removed. This is usually

done within 7 – 14 days following your surgery. You will be advised which sutures you have and the arrangements by the nurse.

After Care

When both your graft and donor areas are healed, the areas need to be cleansed three times a day using a mild soap and patted dry. You should then apply a gentle moisturising cream and continue to massage until the cream is completely absorbed.

Precautions

It is important that your skin graft and donor site are not exposed to the sun, for at least the first 12-18 months, so please:

- Wear clothing that covers the sites
- Use sunscreen SPF 30+ or total sunblock
- Stay in the shade when outdoors

These precautions will reduce the risk of permanent colour change to the area.

Signs of infection to the skin graft or donor site may include

1. Redness
2. Swelling
3. Smelling wound
4. Increased wound exudate
5. Increased pain

   Please contact ward 4 if any concerns.

Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact

Ward 4 (Plastic Surgery and Burns facility)	01772 522244
Plastic Surgery Dressing Clinic	01772 523542 (Mon – Fri, 9am - 4pm)

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk
www.nhs.uk
www.patient.co.uk
www.accessable.co.uk

All our patient information leaflets are available on our website for patients to access and download:

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets

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Lancashire Teaching Hospitals is a smoke-free site. Smoking is not permitted anywhere on any of our premises, either inside or outside the buildings. Our staff will ask you about your smoking status when you come to hospital and will offer you support and advice about stopping smoking including Nicotine Replacement Therapy to help manage your symptoms of withdrawal.

If you want to stop smoking you can also contact the Quit Squad Freephone 0800 328 6297.

Please ask if you would like help in understanding this information. This information can be made available in large print and in other languages.

Gujarati:
આ માહિતીને સમજવામાં સહાયતા જોઇતી હોય તો કૃપા કરીને પૂછો. આ માહિતી મોટા છપાણ માં અને અન્ય ભાષામાં ઉપલબ્ધ કરી શકાય છે.

Romanian:
Vă rugăm să întrebați dacă aveți nevoie de ajutor pentru înțelegerea acestor informații. Aceste informații pot fi puse la dispoziție în format mare și în alte limbi."

Polish:
Poinformuj nas, jeśli potrzebna jest ci pomoc w zrozumieniu tych informacji. Informacje te można również udostępnić dużym drukiem oraz w innych językach

Punjabi:
ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਸਮਝਣ ਵੱਚਿ ਮਦਦ ਲੈਣੀ ਚਾਹੋਗੇ ਤਾਂ ਕਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਪੁੱਛੋ। ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਵੱਡੇ ਪ੍ਰਿੰਟ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵੱਚਿ ਮੁਹੱਈਆ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ।

Urdu:
پوچھیے۔یہ معلومات دوسری ضرورت ہے تو برائے مہربانی سمجھنے کے لیے مدد کی اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات بھی دستیاب ہو سکتی ہے زبانوں اور بڑی چھپائی میں

Arabic:
بـأحرف مطبوعةٌ المعلومـات هذه توفـير يمكـن .تطلـب أن يُرجى المعلومـات هذه فهـم فـي مساعدةً تريـد كنتَ إذا أخرى وبلغـات كبـيرة

Department: Plastic Surgery and Burns Facility
Division: Surgery
Production date: May 2021
Review date: May 2024
JR639 v1