



P: (727) 528 -0321

SKIN GRAFTS: Surgical Site Aftercare Instructions

General Information:

A skin graft is a patch of skin that is removed by surgery from one area of the body and transplanted, or attached, to another area. Skin grafts are often used for repair after skin cancer removal, in areas that are too large to close with sutures and in areas where appropriate cosmesis cannot be achieved without a graft.

Recovery is generally smooth for most patients with a skin graft. To help the skin graft or new skin “take”, a firm tie-on dressing (aka bolster) is often placed over the graft site for the first week.

The Overall Plan:

The skin around the graft may appear swollen and a little red the first week following surgery. It takes 2-6 weeks for the graft to lighten color and begin to look more and more like the surrounding skin. Continue gentle washing and bandaging as needed during this time. Our wound care providers will guide you through this process as each patient’s graft is different.

Donor site: This is the area where the skin has been taken to repair your surgical wound. It is stitched closed with sutures. This too may be pink or light red at times with crusting.

At Home Wound Care

- The top dressing (telfa and tape) we apply after surgery should remain in place for 24 hours. If they become loose before then, gently re-tape. After 24 hours, take your time and gently/slowly remove the dressing. If crusted, use ½ strength hydrogen peroxide (mixed 50:50 with tap water) and Q-tips to gently remove crust and moisten the bandage for ease of removal.
- Wound care should be performed twice daily
- Graft: Gently cleanse around the graft with a Q-tip moistened with tap water, then thoroughly dry with Q-Tips, and apply a thin layer of Vaseline or Aquaphor around the edge. Cover lightly with Telfa or a non-stick bandage and tape in place.
- Donor site: Cleanse the sutures at the donor site with either tap water or ½ strength hydrogen peroxide (if there is crusting involved). Apply ointment mentioned above to sutures and cover with a bandage.
- **In the end, the graft site needs to be DRY.**

Bathing/showering:

- You may shower and/or shampoo if you are careful to keep the stream of water from forcefully striking the graft and donor site. Change the dressing after each shower (see wound care)
- If you notice redness, heat, swelling, white drainage and pain from either site, please give our office a call. These are signs of infection.

Bleeding:

- Careful attention has been given to your wound to prevent bleeding. The dressing you have on are pressure dressings and will also help prevent bleeding.
- You may notice a small amount of blood on the edges of the dressing the first day. This is expected.
- If bleeding is persistent and saturates the dressing, apply firm, steady pressure over the dressing with gauze for 20 minutes. Steady pressure is key (no peeking). There are no large blood vessels associated with this procedure and steady pressure should stop the small capillaries from oozing.
- If bleeding persists, call our office to go to the nearest emergency room while continuing to hold pressure. Persistent bleeding would be unusual but can happen at times.

Pain:

- Post-operative pain is usually minimal. Tylenol is best. If pain persists beyond Tylenol, call our office and a provider may recommend a stronger pain reliever for you.

Other:

- **DO NOT DRINK ALCOHOL FOR 2 DAYS AFTER THE SURGERY.**
- Antibiotics, oral and topical are often prescribed. Due to local pharmacies being understaffed, prescriptions should be available later in the day or next day. They should contact you. If you have not heard by the next day, please call our office for assistance.
- Please clean your scissors with alcohol before each dressing change.
- You may have some clear or blood-tinged drainage from the surgical sites. This generally ceases by day 2.
- **Please, NO smoking, vaping or nicotine products during the healing process.** This impairs healing.
- Call our office with any questions or concerns. We are committed to making your healing process a successful one.