



CARE FOLLOWING YOUR SKIN SURGERY

Skin Graft Wound Care

ACTIVITY:

No strenuous activity for 48 hours (this includes gardening or heavy lifting of any kind).

Resume moderate activity in 48 hours. Walking/strolling slowly is an excellent light activity during the first week. Running and weightlifting are not.

If your surgery was on your head or neck, elevate your head with pillows when you lie down for the first few nights (consider sleeping in a recliner if you have one), and do not bend over to pick up objects or tie shoes for a few days if you can avoid it.

Do not drink alcoholic beverages for 48 hours.

DISCOMFORT:

Do not use aspirin or products containing aspirin for 3 days after your surgery, unless approved by your doctor.

To relieve discomfort, you may take acetaminophen (for example Tylenol or Extra-strength Tylenol) as directed. It works very well for this kind of pain. And, if you combine this with ibuprofen (Advil) the two together are often very helpful in relieving pain (as helpful as Vicodin in one study). If your doctor has given you a different prescription for Vicodin, Tylenol with codeine, Dilaudid, or Percocet, or a different medicine, use as directed.

After the first night (when the numbing medicine wears off and it hurts the most), pain should slowly get better, not worse. A severe increase in pain may indicate a problem. Call the office directly if this occurs.

Numbness, itching and sensitivity to temperature changes can occur after surgery and may take up to 18 months to normalize.

BLEEDING, BRUISING AND SWELLING:

It is normal for your wound to ooze a small amount of blood and stain the dressing.

Expect bruising and swelling in the area of your surgery to be the most noticeable 48-72 hours after surgery. Bruising and swelling usually begin to lessen 4-5 days after surgery. It should fade in 10-14 days.

You may minimize swelling by sleeping with your head elevated on several pillows.

If the swelling worsens rapidly or becomes increasingly tender, contact your doctor.

If your wound bleeds enough that the blood heavily soaks through to the outside of your bandage, do the following:

Leave the bandage in place.

Use tightly rolled up gauze or a cloth to apply direct pressure over the bandage for 20 minutes (no peeking).

If there is substantial bleeding that does not resolve with pressure, please call the office or proceed to the nearest emergency room or call 911 for assistance.

Use additional gauze and tape to maintain pressure once the bleeding has stopped.

INFECTION:

It is normal for your wound to be slightly sore and pink.

If the area becomes increasingly tender, red, or warm, or you develop a fever and chills, then contact your physician.

DIETARY/SMOKING RESTRICTIONS:

If your surgery involved your lips or mouth, avoid hot liquids and foods for the first 2-3 hours after surgery. Eat soft foods and be careful when brushing your teeth until sutures are removed.

Do not smoke for 3 weeks; smoking can be extremely harmful to graft wound healing. It may cause the graft to die.

WOUND CARE:

Leave the bandage in place until you come in for a follow up in one week.

Keep the bandage dry and wash around it carefully.

If the tape becomes soiled or starts to come off, reinforce it with additional paper tape. Refer to the bleeding section above if it continues.

Avoid prolonged exposure to extremely cold temperatures for 3 weeks.

WHEN TO CONTACT YOUR PHYSICIAN:

Your wound continues to bleed briskly through the bandage after you have reinforced it with the applied firm pressure for 20 minutes.

Acetaminophen has not relieved your discomfort.

Your wound becomes increasingly sore, tender, red, or warm.

Your surgery site rapidly swells.

During business hours call our office at 802- 864-0192 if you have any questions or concerns.

After hours: please call 802- 847-4570 or 1-800 -358-1144 and ask to have your surgeon paged.