

Patient information factsheet

Skin surgery under local anaesthetic

We have given you this factsheet because you have been booked in for an operation for your skin problem. Before your operation, we will give you a local anaesthetic, which is an injection that numbs the part of your skin where we will operate on you. You will not feel any pain in this area during the operation. Your operation may involve the complete removal of the affected area of skin, or just the removal of a small sample (a skin biopsy). The laboratory will look at the sample of skin under a microscope and this will help us to diagnose and treat your skin condition.

We will send you a letter with the details of your operation date. If you have been waiting more than three months for your letter, please contact the dermatology department on telephone: 023 8054 0179.

We hope this factsheet will help you to prepare for your operation. Please read all the information so that you know what to expect.

Before your operation

Please eat and drink normally, but do not drink any alcohol.

You should make arrangements for somebody to drive you home, because you will not be able to drive. This is particularly important for operations on the face, arm, hand, lower leg or foot.

Elderly or disabled people and those having larger operations should arrange to have someone to stay with them at home overnight.

You will be in the hospital for 30 minutes up to four hours, depending on the size and complexity of your operation, and the length of recovery time afterwards. Surgical appointment times are planned as accurately as possible. However, surgery can be unpredictable and there may be a delay. Please come prepared for a possible wait.

Smoking increases your risk of getting infections and may delay your healing process. You should stop smoking as long as possible before your appointment, and for at least four weeks afterwards.

Medications

Anti-coagulants (blood thinners)

Take your usual medications on the day of the operation, unless your dermatology doctor has told you not to. This includes aspirin.

If you are taking warfarin, please get your warfarin blood level (INR) checked at your GP surgery one to three days before your operation and bring the result with you. Your INR must be 3.0 or below. If it is higher than 3.0, contact the dermatology department by telephone on **023 8054 0204** as we may need to postpone your surgery.

If you start any new blood-thinning medication, please contact the dermatology department at least **three days** before the operation, on telephone: **023 8054 0204**.

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If you are taking another medication to thin your blood, instructions may vary. Please see advice written below by your dermatology doctor:

Other medications

If you are in any doubt about whether or not to take your medication, contact the dermatology department on telephone: **023 8054 0204**.

Stop taking any herbal remedies such as cod liver oil or fish oils at least one week before the operation.

If you have been prescribed antibiotics to take before the operation, follow the instructions on how to take them.

If there is any change to the medication that you are taking between your clinic appointment and your operation, please notify the surgeon on the day of your operation.

At your clinic appointment, please tell the doctor or nurse if you:

- are taking any blood thinning medications such as warfarin, aspirin, clopidogrel, dipyridamole, dabigatran or rivaroxaban
- are allergic to sticky plaster or tape, local anaesthetic or adrenaline
- have heart trouble, a pacemaker or are prone to fainting
- have a known blood borne infection risk, such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C or HIV
- have a condition which makes you bleed more easily, for example, haemophilia.

On the day of your operation

When you come into hospital for your operation, bring:

- a list of your medications and any allergies
- any specific items that have been requested (for example, bring your INR result if you are on warfarin, or your 'ABPI' or 'doppler' circulation test result if you are having a large operation on the lower leg)
- most importantly, a relative or friend who can accompany you home after the operation, and can help you with the aftercare instructions if necessary

Please wear old, loose, comfortable clothing when you come in for your operation.

Arriving at the hospital

When you arrive at the dermatology department, please report to reception. A nurse will then take you to the surgery room. You may be able to stay in your own clothes, depending on which area of skin we are treating.

What to expect during the operation

Your consultant will confirm the exact details of your operation at your clinic appointment.

The surgeon will inject the area with local anaesthetic (numbing injection) which may be uncomfortable for a short time.

You will be awake during the procedure, but after the injection you should not feel any pain.

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In some cases, we may need to use stitches to close your wound. If not, we will cover it with a dressing.

Operations vary in length between 20 minutes and two hours. You will be able to go home after your operation.

We will send your skin sample to the laboratory for analysis. We will let you know whether you will get your results by letter or at an appointment in the dermatology department.

After your operation

We will give you precise written instructions about looking after your wound, including when and where to have your stitches removed.

If you are due to go on holiday within two weeks of your operation, we may need to reschedule your operation. Please let us know in advance if this is the case.

If you are not sure about something, please ask. We will give you our telephone number in case you have any problems or questions after going home.

A nurse may have dressed your wound with a large bandage, which you will need to keep in place for a few days.

You should continue to take all your medicines as usual, unless your doctor tells you otherwise. After the operation, do not drink alcohol or eat hot or spicy food for 24 hours.

Risks and side effects

You may have some bruising and swelling, particularly after large operations or operations on the face.

In the long term, you will have a scar and possibly some numbness of the wound. These often improve with time. In some areas, scarring is particularly unpredictable, for example on the upper back or chest.

Even with small wounds, sometimes there are unexpected complications such as bleeding that does not stop easily, or wound infection. You will be given written information on what to do if this occurs.

If your procedure was near the mouth, you will need to eat pureed or soft foods that require little chewing for two days after surgery.

If it was on your lower leg or foot, you will need to move around gently and elevate your leg or foot when sitting for the first two weeks. You may have heavy bandaging on your leg, so bring a loose shoe, sandal or slipper to fit over the bandage. Men, please wear loose fitting trousers. Women, please wear loose fitting trousers or a skirt, but no tights.

After a procedure on your hand or fingers, you may need to wear a sling for one or two days.

If the operation was on your face or scalp, you may have a large bandage around your head, in which case you may wish to wear a loose fitting cap or hat for going home. Wear front-opening tops so that you do not need to pull clothing over your head.

After an operation on your chest, abdomen, back or arms, try to wear front-opening tops for ease of dressing and undressing.

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Plan your work and leisure

After a large operation, it is likely you will feel tired for a couple of days. We recommend that you go home and rest after the operation.

You should not swim, play sport or undertake heavy manual work until you have had your stitches removed. A nurse will advise you when your stitches should be removed.

Alternatives

Your doctor has recommended this treatment for you. However, there may be other treatments available. Ask your doctor if you are uncertain.

Seeking and acting on patient feedback is key to improving the quality of our services. The Friends and Family Test gives you the opportunity to give your view on the care or treatment you've received. You can complete the survey online by visiting <http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/PatientsAndVisitors/Patientexperienceandsatisfaction/Friends-and-Family-Test.aspx> and entering the password **rhmo** when prompted.

Contact us

The dermatology nurses can be contacted on telephone **023 8054 0204**, opening hours: Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm, Thursday, 8am to 2pm only.

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If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audiotape, please telephone 023 8120 4688 for help.