

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

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 us on telephone: **023 8054 0179**.

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.

You will be in the hospital for up to four hours, depending on the size and complexity of your operation, and the length of your 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 operation, and for at least four weeks afterwards.

If your lesion changes

If your lesion significantly increases in size while you are waiting for your operation, please contact us on telephone: **023 8054 0179** and send an email containing a photo of your lesion to: uhs.dermatologyrsh@nhs.net (if possible).

Medications

Anti-coagulants (blood thinners)

Take your usual medications (including aspirin) on the day of your operation, unless we have told you not to.

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 test result with you. Your INR must be 3.5 or below. If it is higher than 3.5, contact us on telephone: **023 8054 0204** as we may need to postpone your operation.

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

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

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

If there are any changes to the medication you are taking between your clinic appointment and your operation, please let the surgeon know on the day of your operation.

At your clinic appointment, please tell us 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
- plan to go away or have another medical procedure during the four week period after your operation

On the day of your operation

When you come into hospital for your operation, please bring:

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

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

Before your operation, we will inject the area to be operated on with local anaesthetic (a numbing injection). This may sting briefly before going numb. You will be awake during your operation, but after the injection, you should not feel any pain. If you feel uncomfortable at any point during your operation, please let us know.

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During your operation, we may remove the whole affected area of skin, or we may just remove a small sample (a skin biopsy).

We will then finish your operation by either closing your wound with stitches, or just covering 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. This will help us to diagnose and treat your skin condition. We will let you know whether you will get your results by letter or at an appointment in our 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 necessary). We may have dressed your wound with a large bandage. If this is the case, you will need to keep it in place for a few days.

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.

You should continue to take all your medicines as usual, unless your doctor tells you otherwise.

After your operation, do not drink alcohol or eat hot or spicy food for 24 hours.

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.

If your operation involved a skin graft repair

A skin graft is where normal skin is removed from one area of the body (donor site) and transferred to another area of the body. We will stitch the skin graft into place and secure it with a pressure dressing. This dressing will usually remain in place for seven days. This area will be very fragile for several weeks after your operation. To avoid failure of the skin graft, you will need to rest and restrict activities that move and stretch the skin in this area. For two weeks after your operation, you will also need to avoid strenuous activity, baths or soaking the area. You may also need to attend our department for further wound check appointments. We will discuss this with you if necessary.

Risks and side effects

You may have some bruising and swelling, particularly after large operations or operations on your 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. We will give you written information on what to do if this occurs.

If your operation was near your mouth, you will need to eat puréed or soft foods that need little chewing for two days after your operation.

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If your operation 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. Please also wear loose-fitting trousers, a dress or a skirt (no tights).

If your operation was on your hand or fingers, you may need to wear a sling for one or two days.

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

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

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. We will advise you when your stitches need to be removed.

Results

We will send a letter with your results to both you and your GP, usually within four to six weeks of your operation.

Alternatives

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

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

Dermatology department

Telephone: **023 8054 0204**, opening hours: Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm (Thursday, 8am to 2pm only)

Email: uhs.dermatologyrsh@nhs.net

Share your experience of our dermatology outpatients service

Your feedback helps us to celebrate what's working well and identify where we need to improve. We would be grateful if you would take a moment to review the service you received while in our care. Please scan the QR code below to complete our short online survey.



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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: www.uhs.nhs.uk/PatientsAndVisitors/Patientexperienceandsatisfaction/Friends-and-Family-Test.aspx and entering the password **rhmo** when prompted.

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For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport