

Patient information factsheet

Wound care advice after skin surgery (dermatology)

We have given you this factsheet because you have had skin surgery today. It explains what to expect after having skin surgery and how to care for your wound(s). We hope it helps to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

Date: _____
 Surgeon: _____ Trainee clinician: _____
 Nurse/healthcare assistant (HCA): _____
 Surgical procedure(s): _____

Stitches used: _____
 Removal of stitches by dermatology: ☐ Yes ☐ No Date: _____

Please make an appointment with a nurse at your local GP surgery to have your stitches removed in _____ days. Date: _____

Compression stockings/flight socks recommended: ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Dressings

- Keep your dressing in place and dry for **two days**.
- After two days, you may shower as normal. Remove the wet dressing and gently pat the area dry.
- Apply a thin layer of petroleum jelly directly onto your wound three times a day for two to three weeks (use a **new** pot of petroleum jelly to reduce the risk of infection). Only reapply a plaster if needed.
- Repeat this process daily until your wound has healed (this can take two to three weeks).

Or

- Keep your dressing in place and dry for: _____
- We may ask you to wear compression stockings or bandages after your surgery. If this is the case, you will need to wear the stocking(s) or bandage(s) day and night for **one week** (see 'Compression' section on page 4 for more information).

Local anaesthetic

If we have used local anaesthetic (medication that numbs a specific area of the body) for your surgery, the effects of this will usually wear off after about one to three hours.

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Rest and exercise

You should rest and avoid any strenuous activity for ____ days, as this may increase the risk of bleeding and infection.

If you have had head and/or neck surgery, you should avoid leaning forward for 48 hours.

Pain

If you are in pain, we recommend that you take paracetamol (two tablets of 500mg), which can be repeated after four to six hours (maximum of eight tablets in any 24-hour period).

Bleeding

If you notice blood on your dressing, do not panic – a slight oozing is normal. To stop the bleeding, press firmly on the area **continuously** for 15 to 20 minutes.

If the bleeding doesn't stop, press an ice pack or frozen peas (wrapped in a tea towel) firmly against the wound for another 15 to 20 minutes.

What should I do if I take blood-thinning medication?

If you take blood-thinning medication, such as **aspirin**, **warfarin** or **clopidogrel**, you are at slightly higher risk of bleeding. However, you should **not** stop your blood-thinning medication unless your healthcare team tells you to.

What should I do if I cannot stop the bleeding?

If you cannot stop the bleeding, follow the relevant guidance below.

- During normal working hours (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, 8am to 5pm and Thursday, 8am to 2pm): Call our dermatology department on **023 8120 2871**.
- Between 5pm and 8pm (Monday to Friday): Contact Southampton General Hospital's switchboard on **023 8077 7222** and ask for the **on-call dermatologist**.
- Between 8pm and 10pm: Go to the walk-in urgent treatment centre at Royal South Hants Hospital (Monday to Friday, 7.30am to 10pm, weekends and bank holidays, 8am to 10pm).
- Outside of the hours above: Go to your nearest emergency department.

Swelling and bruising

It is normal to experience some swelling and bruising. This should improve within a week, but it can sometimes take slightly longer.

What should I do if the swelling doesn't improve?

If you have any concerns about the swelling, contact your general practitioner (GP) or our dermatology department for advice.

Infection

We do our best to prevent infection before, during and after your surgery. However, wounds can sometimes still get infected.

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Signs of infection include:

- an increase in redness, pain or swelling
- an increase in discharge from the wound or a bad smell
- feeling unwell
- a fever (a high temperature of 38°C or above)

If you experience any of the symptoms above, please contact your GP or the dermatology department on **023 8120 2871**. You may be prescribed an antibiotic if your wound is infected. If we are unable to answer your call, please leave a message with your name, hospital number, telephone number and a brief reason for your call.

Eating and drinking

It is important to eat a healthy, balanced diet after your surgery, as this will aid your general healing and wellbeing.

If you have had head and/or neck surgery, you should avoid hot drinks and hot, spicy, chewy food for at least six hours after your surgery, as these can increase the risk of bleeding.

Alcohol

Alcohol can increase the risk of bleeding. We advise you to avoid alcohol for 24 hours after your surgery.

Smoking

Smoking affects the healing process of wounds. We advise you to stop or at least reduce your daily amount of cigarettes for the duration of your recovery.

Scarring

We will make every effort to minimise your scar(s). However, scars can be unpredictable.

You should avoid:

- soaking your wound and swimming for four weeks after your surgery (or until your wound has fully healed)
- any physical activity that puts strain on your stitches for two to three weeks after your surgery (straining your stitches may lead to your wound opening which could affect how your wound heals and the appearance of your scar)

After your stitches are removed, we recommend gently massaging your scar with petroleum jelly. You should massage your scar for five minutes at a time, two to three times a day for about a month. This will help improve the way your scar looks.

Some people will develop a slight reaction to the stitches under their skin which will make the scar feel lumpy. This will settle in time.

Numbness

Numbness in the area of the scar can occur. This usually improves over time, but can last up to two years, or in rare cases, longer.

Results

We will send a letter with your results to both you and your GP, usually within _____ weeks of your surgery.

Arm and/or leg surgery

This section contains information for people who have had arm and/or leg surgery.

Compression

Compression on the lower leg can help with healing. If we advise you to wear compression stockings or bandages, you will need to:

- have a weekly surgical site check (either by your practice nurse or at our wound clinic)
- wear the compression stocking(s) or bandage(s) day and night for **one week** after your surgery (after the first week, if you are advised to or choose to continue wearing a compression stocking, you can remove it at night so long as you are able to reapply it in the morning)
- keep the compression stocking(s) or bandage(s) clean and dry between the dressing changes
- bring a clean compression stocking with you to each wound review appointment (we will provide you with a spare stocking, so you always have one to wear while you hand-wash the other one)
- sit with your legs elevated at rest and avoid standing for long periods of time (aim to sit for at least **30 minutes every hour** with your feet positioned a little higher than your hips, if you are able to do so)
- stay active with gentle exercise (stand up at least **once every hour** to prevent pressure ulcers (sores))

Contact your practice nurse immediately and remove the compression stocking(s) or bandage(s) if you experience:

- any pins and needles in the affected limbs
- toe discolouration
- pain

Sling

We may give you a sling to wear if you have had surgery on your hand or lower arm. The sling will help keep your arm elevated, which helps prevent bleeding, swelling and discomfort.

You should wear the sling for 24 to 48 hours, or longer if we have advised you otherwise.

Do not wear the sling overnight.

Contact us

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

Dermatology department

Opening hours: Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm (Thursday, 8am to 2pm only)

Telephone: **023 8120 2871**

Email: dermatologysurgicalbookingteam@uhs.nhs.uk

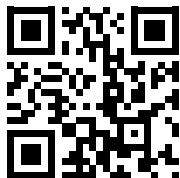
Useful links

www.legsmatter.org

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Share your experience of our dermatology outpatient 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 or click the following link to complete our short online survey: <https://gthr.co.uk/71a9e>



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. For more information about how to complete this survey, visit: www.uhs.nhs.uk/for-patients/patient-experience-and-satisfaction

If you are a patient at one of our hospitals and need this document translated, or in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **0800 484 0135** or email **PFSH@uhs.nhs.uk**

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

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