

Additional Notes

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To ask for this leaflet in larger print, please contact the patient experience team on **0300 019 8499** or email uhd.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net.

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Dermatology Minor Skin Surgery

Cautery and Stitches

This leaflet is to help explain the post operative care for your wound after skin surgery.

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Cautery

How do I care for my wound following Cautery?

Cautery is an electrical burn of the skin.

Your wound will usually have been covered with a dressing if so, keep it on for: hours, and then remove it.

Gently clean around the wound, with warm water and pat dry with a clean towel. Avoid using any soap products. After which, leave the area open to the air, this will allow the wound to dry and form a scab.

Your wound will then heal naturally, and the scab will fall off when it is ready and leave a scar. Do not be tempted to 'pick' at the scab. If the area becomes itchy you may apply some Vaseline™. Protect all treated areas from direct sunlight.

You may shower only after the dressing has been removed. After showering, gently pat the area dry. Please refrain from bathing (and also swimming) until the area has completely healed.

Please continue reading from “**What should I do if I feel any discomfort?**” towards the end of this leaflet.

When can I expect to receive the results of my skin surgery?

We will provide you with your histology results by telephone, letter, or by offering you another appointment. This usually is within 3 - 8 weeks. However, if you have not received your results after eight weeks, please contact the Dermatology Unit on **0300 019 5465**, so we can investigate.

Who do I contact if I need any further advice?

For non-urgent advice you can contact the dermatology nurses by leaving an answerphone message - including your name, hospital number (or date of birth), and telephone number - by calling the Dermatology Resource Unit, Christchurch Hospital on **0300 019 5471** (messages are collected Monday to Friday only) .

On your Discharge: Important Notice

The risk of developing blood clots can persist for some weeks after discharge. There are certain signs to look out for that could mean that you have a blood clot. You should contact your doctor immediately if you develop any of the following symptoms while you are in hospital or after you go home.

- Leg pain
- Leg swelling
- Warm or discoloured skin on the legs
- Enlarged or more noticeable veins near the surface of the skin on your legs
- New-onset shortness of breath
- Unexplained chest pain
- Coughing up blood

Please contact your GP as soon as possible if you think you have a blood clot or in the event of an emergency telephone **999**. NHS Non-Emergency number **111**

If I have a dressing over the wound what should I do?

Keep it on for:

..... hours, or for
..... days,

and then remove it. You can dampen the dressing with water should you find it is sticking too much.

After you have removed the dressing, the wound may appear swollen and bruised, this is normal and should resolve in a few days.

Meanwhile, clean the area with warm water, pat dry with a clean towel. Avoid using any soap products. After which, leave the area open to the air, as this will aid the healing process.

You may shower only after the dressing has been removed. After showering, gently pat the area dry.

Please refrain from bathing (and also swimming) until the stitches have been removed and the wound has completely healed.

When and where will the stitches be removed?

A couple of nights before your stitches are due to be removed, you may find it beneficial to gently apply a small amount of clean Vaseline™ over the line of stitches and leave it on overnight. You can gently wash it off the following morning. This can help remove/soften any scabbing that may have formed over the wound and may also make removing the stitches easier.

Practice Nurse at your GP surgery in days

Dermatology Resource Unit on:

..... at

District Nurse in days time.

Please telephone your GP surgery to confirm this appointment with the district nurse 48 hours after your surgery unless otherwise directed.

External dissolvable stitches (Vicryl Rapide stitches)
These stitches will start to dissolve in approximately 7-10 days. You may gently wash the area once the dressing has been removed, but do not soak it.

After the stitches have been removed what should I do?

One week after the stitches have been removed, if there are no signs of infection, and the wound has closed together, massage clean Vaseline™ into the scar twice a day. Start massaging very gently at first, but you can increase the pressure as the weeks go by. This is to help ease the scarring and encourage any internal stitches to dissolve. This can be applied for up to 2 - 3 months. Keep the area out of the sun.

What should I do if I feel any discomfort?

It is normal for your wound to feel sore following skin surgery, especially when the local anaesthetic wears off (approximately in 2 - 4 hours). We suggest you take a pain killer (analgesic) such as Paracetamol when you get home, and then as required up to the maximum permitted dose. However, do not take any Aspirin or NSAIDS for example Ibuprofen (unless already prescribed by your GP) to minimise the risk of further bleeding.

What should I do if my wound bleeds?

Occasionally your wound may bleed after surgery. If this happens, leave the dressing in place and apply continuous pressure over the dressing for 5 - 10 minutes and raise the area that is bleeding. If required, apply another dressing on top.

However, if you have excessive bleeding and it does not stop, contact the Dermatology Unit **0300 019 5285**, Monday to Friday, 9am - 4.30pm. After those hours, please attend your local Emergency Department.

What should I do if my wound becomes infected?

As with any surgical procedure, there is a risk of infection. If this occurs, it generally happens within 3 - 7 days following the operation. Signs to look for are increase in pain, redness, heat, swelling and/or leakage of pus / blood stained fluid.

If you notice these symptoms or you are concerned please contact your GP for advice.

Stitches

How do I care for my wound with stitches?

To help minimise the risk of bleeding, infection and/or the wound from coming open (dehiscence), after your surgery, please:

- Immediately after the procedure and for the remainder of the day rest up, avoiding any strenuous activities. A further period of reduced activity may also be appropriate and this would have been discussed with you after your procedure.
- Where appropriate raise the area treated, for example, if surgery was performed on your leg, when sitting raise it up on a stool. If on the head, when lying down an extra pillow in bed is advisable.
- If surgery was performed on your neck or head, please avoid for at least 24 to 48 hours, alcohol, very hot spicy food, very hot drinks, prolonged stooping (lowering your head) and vigorous exercise.
- Protect all treated areas from direct sunlight.