

# Lower Leg Skin Grafts

## *Post operative instructions*

### **Before your operation**

- Organise for a responsible adult to accompany you home after your operation and stay with you for the full 24 hours after your surgery
- Plan to have approximately two weeks off work

### **What to expect immediately after surgery**

You can expect slight bleeding, mild pain and discomfort for a few days with mild swelling and bruising which may last for up to 2 weeks.

Everyone recovers from their anaesthetic differently; but post operative nausea is a common side effect following general anaesthesia. If you are experiencing nausea we recommend eating light, small meals throughout the day. If nausea or vomiting is severe, please contact us.

### **What to expect the first week post surgery**

**Constipation:** Constipation is common following a general anaesthetic. To avoid constipation, ensure you drink plenty of fluids and foods containing fibre. If necessary, we recommend a gentle laxative drink such as Movicol. This can be purchased from your chemist.

**Pain relief:** The majority of patients will experience mild pain following surgery. Pain should be manageable and will slowly ease over the course of your recovery. Your anaesthetist may provide you with pain medication, to be taken as directed.

If you have not been given a prescription, we recommend the use of Panadol or Panadol extra to manage any discomfort.

Do not take aspirin for at least 10 days following surgery as this can increase the risk of bleeding. If your pain is severe and does not subside with pain medication, please contact us

**Positioning:** Leg wounds have a tendency to swell more than other parts of the body, due to this we advise that you walk or sit down during the first two weeks of your recovery, however you must not stand still. Keep the affected limb elevated at all times that you are seated to help reduce swelling, this includes when in the bathroom.

**Driving:** You are not to drive or operate machinery for 24 hours post surgery. You can drive when your wound and/or pain medication no longer impedes your functionality.

**Dressings:** You may shower or bathe the day following your operation but must ensure the dressings stay dry and in place until your first post operative appointment. Your incisions may seep some fluid and blood for a short time following surgery, you may gently clean around the area to remove dried drainage.

**Exercise:** Avoid bending, straining and heavy lifting for the first two weeks following surgery. In addition to aggravating swelling, these activities may elevate blood pressure and start bleeding.

**Removal of sutures:** We will normally remove sutures at your first post operative review. If absorbable sutures have been used, removal will not be necessary.

### **Recovery after the first week**

**Exercise:** After approximately 2 weeks you may be able to resume light exercise, strenuous lifting (e.g. children) and household duties such as cleaning. Vigorous exercise can usually be resumed after 4 weeks.

**Scar Management:** Skin grafts will generally be slightly red for a few months and then begin to fade, it can take up to 18 months for a scar to mature, usually leaving a pale, soft, flat and supple surface. On your second post operative visit you will be advised on the most effective scar management options to ensure you have the best possible outcome.

**Alcohol:** Alcohol can increase post-operative bleeding and can be dangerous in combination with your pain medication. Do not drink alcohol until you have finished taking all pain medication.

**Smoking:** We recommend you do not smoke for at least 3-4 weeks following your operation as smoking impedes blood flow to the skin and increases healing time.

**Contact us if you develop:**

- A fever or become unwell
- Nausea and vomiting which persists after 48 hours
- Spreading redness/rash over the operative area or suture lines
- Pain which is not relieved or controlled by your pain-killers
- Have sudden copious discharge of fluid or oozing from your wounds
- For after hours emergencies or if you are unable to contact the office, visit your local GP or emergency room.