

Skin Flaps & 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 one week off work, however many patients find they are able to return to work a few days after their procedure

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: For the first week following your procedure, the affected limb should be elevated during the day and when sleeping, this will help to reduce swelling.

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 week 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 1 week 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 2 weeks.

Scar Management: Skin graft and flap scars will generally be slightly red and raised for a few months and then begin to fade. If a graft is required, the surgeon will always try to choose a donor site which will have the closest match in skin tone, colour and texture. 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.