

Surgery ~ Skin Cancer Excision Post-Op Instructions

SKIN CANCER EXCISION POST-OP INSTRUCTION SHEET

The following post-operative instructions are specific to your procedure & are meant to serve as guidelines to help you through your recovery. Please read them carefully.

EMERGENCIES

A hematoma is the most common emergent event within the first 24 hours. If your surgical site swells to twice its normal size, call Dr. Cooper immediately. Rest assured ~ this is not a subtle event! You will know when to call.

For routine matters, please call the office during normal business hours (9AM – 5PM). If you have an emergency that cannot wait, I am available by cell phone (307) 699-3115 on evenings & weekends. Please respect my family time & call **ONLY** for urgent or emergent issues. Non-emergent phone calls after hours & on weekends will be subject to a \$50.00 fee. Examples of urgent or emergent issues include the following: sudden onset or extreme swelling of the surgical site, redness / warmth involving your incision(s), or unilateral calf pain or swelling. If I do not answer right away, leave a message. I will call you back! If you have a life-threatening emergency, such as crushing chest pain or shortness of breath, call 911 immediately. Do not try to reach me first. If you have any questions on a Thursday or Friday, please call the office to have those questions answered. Do not delay those questions & have those issues become an urgent matter over the weekend.

NARCOTICS AND PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS

Nausea is normal when taking multiple medications. To minimize this, avoid taking medications on an empty stomach. Try to stagger your medications 20-30 minutes apart. You may “halve” the pain pills or muscle relaxers if they are too strong for you. If your pain is relatively well-controlled, you may alternate your pain medication with extra-strength Tylenol. Motrin / Aleve / Ibuprofen may also be used beginning 7-10 days following your procedure.

You will receive ONE prescription for pain medication. No refills on narcotics will be authorized for this procedure, so please use them wisely. Refills on all other prescriptions will not be authorized after hours or on weekends. Please plan ahead accordingly.

If you are taking narcotics for any other reason prior to your procedure, please take this into consideration. Consultation with your pain management physician prior to your surgery is highly encouraged & is the responsibility of the patient.

ANESTHESIA

You may experience a sore throat after surgery. This is common after general anesthesia & will resolve in a few days.

NAUSEA

Nausea is common after general anesthesia. Anti-nausea medication will be prescribed for you. A clear liquid diet is recommended until the nausea subsides, after which time you may resume a regular diet.

BANDAGES

It is generally quite difficult to maintain a dressing for any length of time on the face. Apply a thin layer of antibiotic ointment twice daily to the wound. You may cover with a light gauze dressing, Band-Aid, etc. if desired. Expect some drainage from around the surgical site for 1-3 days. You may “blot” the drainage with a gauze or a clean, soft cloth. For skin cancer excisions involving any other part of the body, please leave the dressing in place until your follow-up appointment.

PERSONAL CARE

For skin cancer excisions involving the face, you may shower on post-op day 3 facing AWAY from water. You may gently clean around the surgical site with a warm, washcloth and pat dry. It is acceptable to get the face “misty” wet.

For skin cancer excisions involving any other part of the body, your dressings are waterproof, and you may shower as usual on post-operative day 1.

DIET

If you experience nausea after surgery, a clear liquid diet is advisable until the nausea subsides. Otherwise, there are no dietary restrictions after surgery. Drink plenty of water! Water intake & stool softeners will help minimize constipation from narcotics (pain medication) after surgery.

CONSTIPATION

Constipation is a common complaint after surgery & can be associated with anesthesia and narcotics (pain medications). Hydration & utilizing pain medication only when absolutely necessary will help minimize this. Stool softeners & laxatives (Colace, Dulcolax, Miralax) are over-the-counter medications that can help alleviate your symptoms. If these are insufficient, a Fleets Enema is the next best option.

SLEEP

Sleeping with the head elevated for the first few days after surgery may help reduce swelling.

ITCHING / RASHES

Itching around your incisions is normal & is to be expected after surgery. It is considered a sign of healing. However, severe itching with redness or blistering is often a sign of a reaction to medications or adhesive. If you experience itching with redness or blistering around your incisions, gently remove your dressings & take an antihistamine. Benadryl, Claritin, Allegra, Zyrtec, or Xyzal are all acceptable. You may also use Benadryl cream, but do NOT use any topical containing hydrocortisone.

Please let us know if you have a sensitivity to adhesives or tape prior to surgery. This will help avoid skin sensitivity involving your incisions.

STITCHES

Stitches will be removed in the office approximately 7-10 days after surgery.

DRIVING

Wait at least 24 hours after you have stopped taking prescription pain medication to operate a vehicle.

EXERCISE / ACTIVITY

Light activity until otherwise instructed. Indoor / Outdoor walking is acceptable. No weights or running for 3-4 weeks.

SEXUAL ACTIVITY

You may resume sexual activity when you feel comfortable doing so. Please remember that you have recently had a major surgical procedure and utilize good judgement.

ALCOHOL

You may consume alcoholic beverages once you are no longer taking prescription pain medication. However, please take into consideration your other medications and how they may interact with alcohol.

FEVER

If you experience any increased warmth or redness around your incision OR fever (>101.5), please call the office.

TRAVEL

No travel for 2-3 weeks following your procedure.

OTHER

No swimming (chlorine / saltwater / etc.) for 3 weeks.

Cold compresses are acceptable. However, please **DO NOT APPLY ICE OR HEAT DIRECTLY** to the surgical site. Your recently operated skin cannot sense extremes of temperatures, which can result in heat or cold burns and compromise your results.

Arnica and Bromelain are recommended homeopathic supplements which facilitate resolution of bruising and swelling after surgery. These can be found online at www.vitamedica.com/product/arnica-bromelain