

Surgery ~ Skin Graft Post-Op Instructions

FULL-THICKNESS SKIN GRAFTPOST-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 either your donor site or recipient site begins to swell to twice its normal size, call Dr. Cooper immediately. Rest assured ~ this is not a subtle event! You will most certainly notice a significant change in your surgical site.

For routine matters, please call the office during business hours. 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, 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. 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

Your “donor site” incision will be closed with stitches & dressed with a waterproof dressing. Please leave this intact until your follow-up visit. Your “recipient site” will be dressed with a yellow gauze dressing which will be temporarily tacked to the margins of the wound with small stitches.

Gauze “fluffs” & a waterproof dressing will likely cover the yellow dressing. You may experience some drainage on your dressing prior to your follow-up appointment. This is normal. Please leave your dressing intact until your follow-up visit.

PERSONAL CARE

You may shower on post-op day 3 facing AWAY from water. Gently clean around the surgical site with a warm, soapy washcloth & pat dry. You may get the face & your dressings “misty” wet, but do not saturate.

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

If your procedure involved the head & neck area, sleeping with the head elevated for the first few days after surgery may help reduce swelling. Otherwise, there are no restrictions.

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 can be 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

Your 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

Light activity for approximately 2 weeks, after which time you may resume your usual activities.

SEXUAL ACTIVITY

You may resume sexual activity after 2 weeks. Please remember that you have recently had a major surgical procedure & utilize good judgement.

ALCOHOL

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

FEVER

There is no reason to check your temperature after surgery unless you believe it to be extremely high. Your body will respond to the “injury” of surgery with a low-grade fever for several days. This is a normal reaction to stress & part of the healing process. If you do experience increased warmth or redness around your incisions OR fever (>101.5), please call the office.

TRAVEL

No travel for 2 weeks following your procedure.

OTHER

No swimming (chlorine / saltwater / other) for 3-4 weeks.

Cold compresses are acceptable. However, please DO NOT APPLY HICE 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 & Bromelain are recommended homeopathic supplements which facilitate resolution of bruising & swelling after surgery. These can be found online at www.vitamedica.com/product/arnica-bromelain-