

Skin Surgery

Information and advice for patients

Dermatology

Introduction

This booklet is designed to give you information about having skin surgery and the care you will receive before, during and after your operation. We hope it will answer some of the questions that you or those who care for you may have at this time. It does not replace the discussion between you and your surgeon but helps you to understand more about what is discussed.

Why do I need an operation?

You have a skin lesion that needs to be removed. A lesion is an abnormality. There are two possible reasons to perform this operation:

- Diagnosing a lesion. Lesions on the skin can sometimes be difficult to diagnose. For this reason it needs to be removed so that it can be looked at under the microscope to confirm the diagnosis.
- Treating a lesion. If you already have a diagnosis it may be necessary to perform more skin surgery to treat the lesion.

In some cases removing the lesion to diagnose it can also be enough to treat it. In other cases more treatment may be recommended. Your doctor will discuss this with you.

You may be asked to attend the medical illustration department for medical photography of the lesion, which will be kept in your record as a confidential file.

Do I need to stop taking any medication?

You can continue to take most medication as normal but it is important that you tell your doctor what medication you are taking and to bring these with you on the day. Some drugs such as aspirin, clopidogrel, warfarin, newer anticoagulants and anti-inflammatory medications can cause bleeding after an operation. You should ask the doctor for advice on what to do about your medicines.

Can I eat and drink before the operation?

If your operation is under local anaesthesia you can usually eat and drink before the operation although you may prefer to have a light meal only. Most operations for skin surgery can be carried out under a local anaesthetic with you awake.

If you are going to have a general anaesthetic for your surgery you will not be able to eat or drink for several hours before your surgery. Your medical team will tell you how long you will need to go without food. If you are having a general anaesthetic then you will be given full details of anything else you will need to do to prepare for the operation. Should you require

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a distraction, you may bring headphones or a book and you will be advised on the day of your surgery if you can use it.

If you have a cardiac device such as a pacemaker, or implanted defibrillator, please inform the doctor.

Arriving to the dermatology department on the day of surgery

On the day of your surgery, your ID will be checked by the health care assistant and a wrist band put on your arm. Your observations will be taken and you will also see a nurse who will ask you what medications you currently take and questions related to infection control.

What happens in the operating theatre?

The operation will take place in an operating theatre. You will be given a hospital gown to wear, or if you prefer you can choose to wear your own clothes. You will be accompanied into theatre by a health care professional and made comfortable. Your consent form will be checked with you and the lesion and surrounding skin will be made numb with an injection of local anaesthetic. It may be uncomfortable whilst the anaesthetic is being injected but you should not feel any pain once this is done. Your skin will then be cleaned and covered with a sheet. The doctor will check that the area is numb before proceeding with the operation. It is important that you tell us if there is any pain after this point

Once the doctor is happy that the area is numb he or she will remove the area of skin as required. Your skin will then be repaired using stitches, surgical glue, clips, paper tapes or a combination of these.

It is important to keep as still as possible during the operation.

Will I have a dressing?

Your wound will normally be covered with a dressing which should be kept dry and in place. The nurses in the theatre will give you advice on caring for your dressing before you leave. Following this advice should minimise the risk of any complication and help with your recovery.

When will I be able to go home?

The medical team will monitor your progress after the operation, and normally you should be able to go home soon after the operation.

If the surgery is to your face then you may find that certain types of dressings can cover your eye or impair your vision. Other types of dressings may restrict your arm or leg movements. For your safety and that of others please arrange for a friend or relative to collect you following your operation. We advise you not to travel home alone. If you are planning to travel home by

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car, someone else should drive, otherwise you should take a taxi. We would not recommend that you travel home by bus or train.

What should I do when I get home?

When you get home you should rest quietly for the first 12 hours following a small operation or for two to three days following a larger operation. You will be given advice before you leave. You should not drive for at least 24 hours following the anaesthetic and it may take longer before you feel safe to drive.

Will I experience pain when the local anaesthetic wears off?

The anaesthetic may last for two to three hours before wearing off. There may be some mild pain once this happens but simple pain killers such as paracetamol should be sufficient. Do not take aspirin unless it is prescribed by your doctor for another condition. The pain should not last more than one to two days. If you experience more severe pain or it lasts more than two days you should contact the hospital for advice.

What should I do if the wound bleeds?

A small amount of bleeding or oozing is normal following an operation, but sometimes after the anaesthetic has worn off bleeding can be a bit more troublesome. If this happens, then using a clean towel or dressing, press firmly on the wound for 10 — 15 minutes without removing the existing dressing. If the wound is on an arm or leg, raise the affected limb. If it is on your head you should sit upright, this will reduce the blood flow to the area and encourage clotting. If after 15 minutes of constant pressure the wound continues to bleed and the dressing becomes soaked with blood contact the hospital for advice.

What should I do if the wound becomes infected?

Redness, swelling, increased pain, or pus or a watery fluid from the wound may indicate infection. You should contact the hospital or your GP immediately for advice as treatment with antibiotics may be required.

Do the stitches need to be removed?

When you are discharged you will be informed if there are any stitches to be removed. If so these will either be removed by the practice nurse at your GP's surgery or during your next visit to the outpatients department. The nurses will tell you what you need to do about having your stitches removed before you leave the hospital.

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When will the results of the operation be available?

The removed lesion will be sent to the Pathology Department to be carefully examined with a microscope. You will be contacted when the results are available with a letter or a follow up will be made. If you have any concerns, or have not been contacted in 6 – 8 weeks, please contact the department on 0121 507 6772 or your consultant's secretary.

Will I have a scar?

You will be left with a scar. This is an unavoidable result of any surgery. Every effort will be made to minimise scarring and make it as unnoticeable as possible. The doctor carrying out the surgery will consider carefully how they repair the wound and where to place the scar and where possible will follow your lines and wrinkles in order to disguise it.

Everyone heals differently and wounds on different parts of the body heal differently as well. Wounds on the face tend to heal well, whereas wounds on the shoulders, chest, back and over the breast bone may be more noticeable. Sometimes the scars may become red, raised, lumpy and itchy. This is called a keloid scar. There is some treatment available for this but it is not always successful. Infection and bleeding can also make scars more noticeable so should be treated as soon as possible.

Once your wound has healed gently massaging with Vaseline may help. In some cases a visible scar is unavoidable. However, if you are concerned about your scar, please seek advice from your consultant at your next appointment.

It is important that you make a list of all medicines you are taking and bring it with you to all your follow-up clinic appointments. If you have any questions at all, please ask your surgeon, or a member of the team. It may help to write down questions as you think of them so that you have them ready. It may also help to bring someone with you when you attend your outpatient's appointments.

Complications of skin surgery

These are some examples of other complications to be aware of. They will all be discussed with you before your operation. They include:

- Pain
- Swelling
- Nerve damage
- Wound not closing
- Incomplete excision
- Further surgery

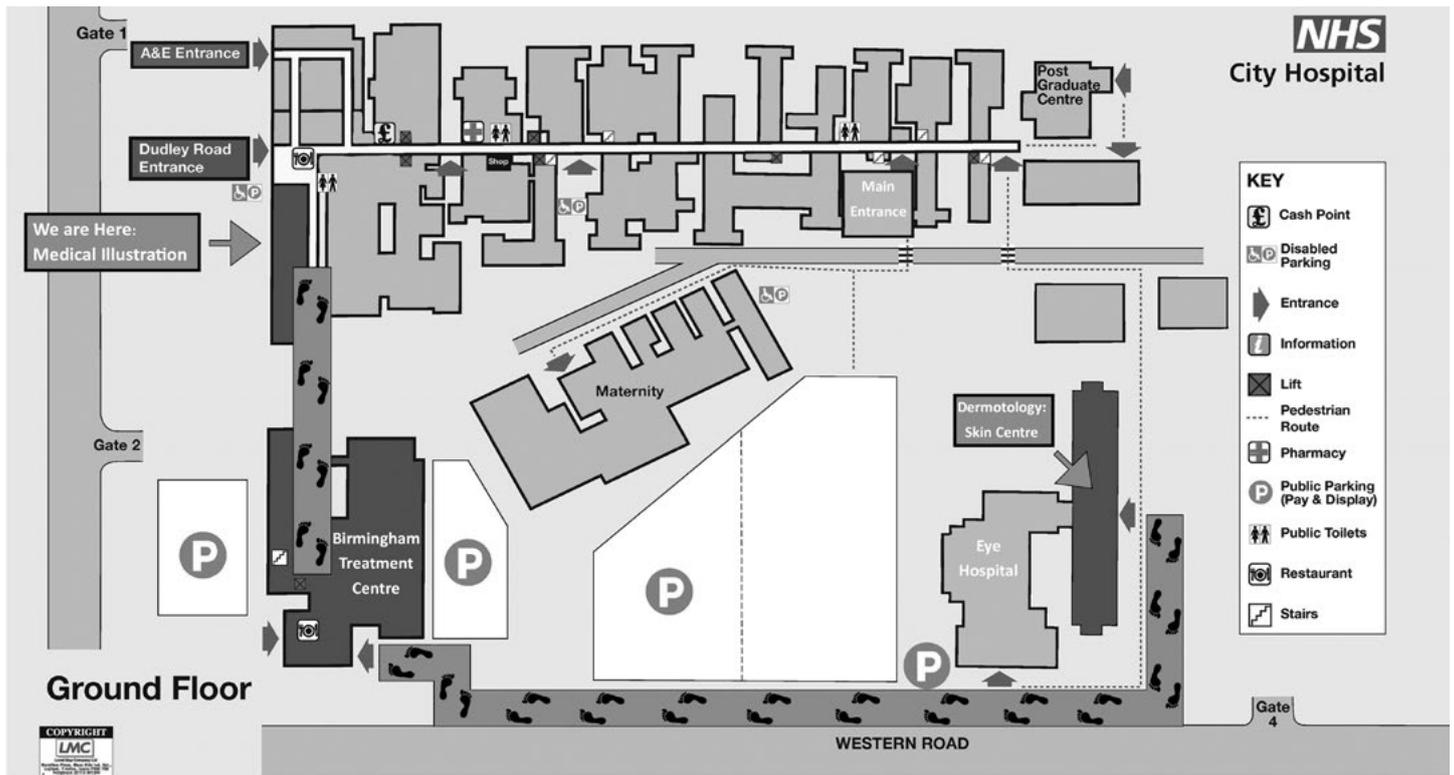
Some wounds will be left to heal themselves, without sutures.

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To get to Medical Illustration please read these instructions



Following the footsteps on the map above...

1. Turn right out of the Skin Centre main entrance (Sheldon Block).
2. Follow the path until you reach the road.
3. Take another right turn following the road until you reach the Treatment Centre.
4. Go into the Treatment Centre and turn right towards the escalators.
5. Go up to the 1st floor using the escalators, stairs or lift.
6. Follow the main corridor past the fracture clinic towards the Main Hospital, keep going through the link corridor until you reach Medical Illustration.
7. Please ring the bell and take a seat outside if the door is closed. If it is open, please take a seat in the waiting area.

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Further information

British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (BAAPS)

Information about scars.

https://baaps.org.uk/patients/procedures/16/scars_and_keloids

British Association of Dermatologists (BAD)

Patient information leaflets, where you can find information on your diagnosis and dermatology surgery.

<https://www.bad.org.uk/for-the-public/patient-information-leaflets>

(Websites accessed 2 March 2022).

For details of local cancer support groups and organisations, please ask your Medical Team.

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our website www.swbh.nhs.uk, follow us on Twitter @SWBHnhs and like us on Facebook www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs.

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