

## **Dermatology Department Day Treatment Clinic**

### **Wound care advice following an excision with a flap repair**

#### **Information for Patients and Carers**

This leaflet gives you information and advice on caring for your surgical wound when you are at home. You have had an excision to remove a skin lesion with a local flap repair. This has involved taking out the original blemish and repairing the wound with skin tissue which has been taken from a nearby area and re-positioned. The flap has remained connected to the skin at all times and the edges have been stitched to allow the wound to heal.

#### **What problems may occur?**

##### **Bleeding**

If you experience any bleeding apply firm pressure over the area for 10 minutes. If the bleeding does not stop, you will need to contact Day Treatment for advice and a wound check.

##### **Wound infection**

The most common complication following surgery is wound infection. An infection occurs when germs grow in the wound, and this usually slows down the healing process.

You should contact your GP or Day Treatment for advice if you notice any of the following:

- An increase in pain, even with pain killers
- Redness to the wound or surrounding area
- Swelling to the wound area
- Weeping or oozing of blood-like liquid or pus
- Unpleasant smell
- You develop a temperature or begin to feel generally unwell

Wound infections can be treated successfully if they are caught early. An infected wound may require more frequent dressing changes, a course of antibiotic tablets or the use of an antibiotic cream.

#### **How do I look after my wounds?**

**Changing a dressing-** a dressing can be left in place for up to 7 days (or as advised by your nurse) provided the wound is not oozing. If the dressing becomes wet from blood or any other liquid, it must be changed. We will give you replacement dressings.

Before you remove and change the dressing:

- Wash your hands with soap and water
- Carefully take the old dressing off
- Try to avoid touching the wound with your fingers
- Do not apply any antiseptic/antibiotic creams unless advised to do so by the nurse
- Try not to touch the inside of the dressing when covering the wound so that it remains clean

**Looking after stitches-** most stitches will be removed by the nurse. If the wound has dissolvable stitches these usually disappear in 7-10 days. You may see fine threads poking out from the wound, **DO NOT PULL** on them but you may trim them carefully with a clean pair of scissors.

### **Bathing and showering**

- It is better to have a shower rather than a bath
- Bathing or soaking the wound may cause the skin to soften and the scar tissue may re-open
- Dressings can be showerproof. This usually means they can stand the spray from a shower but should not be submerged in water. If a dressing becomes wet, it must be changed
- Do not put any soap, shower gel, body lotion, talcum powder, or other products on the healing wound
- If the wound is not covered with a dressing, do not worry if you splash the wound with water but do not rub it as this will cause pain and delay the healing
- Pat the scar dry after bathing with a clean soft towel, and avoid rubbing the area
- Do not apply make-up over the scar until has healed completely healed

### **General advice**

- Avoid excessive pressure over the wound - lying on them
- If the area is on the head avoid stooping and lying flat to minimise swelling and bleeding
- If the area is on the arms of hands avoid heavy lifting and stretching
- If the area is on the lower leg, you should rest the affected leg on a stool or on pillows and avoid standing still for long periods

### **Will I have a scar?**

It is impossible to cut the skin without causing a scar. At first the new scars will appear quite red but over time this will fade to become a more natural colour. Sometimes scars can become raised, red or lumpy. Once the scar has completely healed (around 4 weeks after surgery if there are no complications) the area can be massaged using a non-perfumed moisturiser such as petroleum jelly or Vaseline for approximately two minutes each day for 6-8 weeks, with firm fingertip pressure and concentrating on any lumpy areas.

### **How to contact us**

Monday to Friday (0830-1800) Day Treatment 01603 288386

Saturday and Sunday (0830-1630) Dermatology in Patient Co-ordinator 01603 286286

