

Patient's Instructions

Postoperative Instructions for Full-Thickness Skin Graft

1. After your procedure, you will have a row of sutures that is present from the donor site. This is usually in the front of the ear if this was the location of the skin graft. At times the skin graft will come from other locations such as the neck. You will need to cover this area 3-4 times a day with an antibiotic ointment. We prefer you to use Polysporin or Bacitracin ointment which is over the counter and can be gotten at any pharmacy. We do not recommend you use Neosporin as many people will end up having an allergic reaction to this due to the neomycin that is present in it.
2. You will also have a dressing that will be sewn over the graft site. It is very important that this dressing is in place as it is securing the graft until it can establish its own blood supply. The dressing that is sewn on has antibacterial properties also. This can be kept moist by applying Polysporin or Bacitracin ointment directly on top of the bolster dressing.
3. You should avoid getting this dressing or your donor site wet until your follow up appointment. If you have any dried blood or crusting around dressing or around or near the donor site incision it can be cleaned with peroxide on a Q-tip. You will need to reapply Polysporin or Bacitracin after cleaning the area. It is very important to keep both sites covered in antibiotic ointment.
4. It is not unusual to have a little bit of bleeding after the procedure once the local anesthetic wears off. This is usually controlled by holding some pressure either over the incision site or applying direct pressure on the bolster if it is bleeding from underneath the bolster dressing. Be careful to avoid traumatizing the sutures that are holding the bolster in place.
5. After surgery you cannot do any bending, stooping, heavy lifting over 5 pounds until after your follow up appointment.
6. You could have some swelling and bruising at your surgical sites following your surgical procedure. This will typically peak at 48 hours then start to decrease.
7. At your follow up appointment your bolster dressing and sutures will be removed in the office. This appointment is typically 7-10 days after your procedure, which will be scheduled by Robin.
8. Once the bolster dressing is removed you will cover the graft and the donor site with Polysporin or Bacitracin ointment 3-4 times a day just as you did after surgery. The skin is very fragile and you should not put any dressing over the graft (band aid, etc.). No exceptions to this. **DO NOT COVER THIS AREA WITH ANY TYPE OF BANDAGE.**
9. Since your skin has been somewhat disrupted from its normal blood supply when the graft is moved sometimes different portions of the graft will heal better than other areas. This could at times result in contour deformities or irregularities. For this reason at times we will do a secondary procedure at the graft site and the surrounding skin with the CO2 laser several months after your initial procedure. This is done to help to blend the graft. But this will be discussed after the initial surgical site is completely healed.
10. This procedure is typically not a very painful procedure. We will provide you with a prescription for a pain medication as well as an antibiotic to take after your surgery. These will be sent to your pharmacy at your preoperative appointment. We strongly encourage you to take Tylenol for pain instead of any stronger pain medication which has more side effects.
11. We recommend that you **do not take any ibuprofen, aspirin or Motrin** as these drugs can make you bleed easier and should be avoided for at least 10 days after your procedure.
12. If you have any questions and during normal business hours please call our office directly at 910-295-0216. If after office hours you may call 910-715-1000 and ask for plastic surgeon on call for Pinehurst Surgical Clinic. If you are having a medical emergency you should call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.