

Post-operative advice for patients who have had skin cancer surgery

Will I have a dressing?

You will usually have a dressing which may vary in size depending on the type of surgery you have had.

With Sutures - If you had an excision with sutures, you will be asked to keep the dressing in place and keep dry until you are seen at 7 days for your follow up appointment.

Without Sutures - If you had a punch or shave sample without sutures you will be asked to keep the dressing on for the first 48 hours, after this you may remove the dressing, clean the wound with soap and water and apply a dressing daily until the scab has healed.

How long will the wound be painful for?

You may feel some soreness after the anaesthetic has worn off. If this happens, you may take paracetamol (if not allergic to it). Paracetamol is recommended. Aspirin, or ibuprofen are **NOT** recommended as this can cause the wound to bleed.

What happens if my wound starts to bleed?

It is normal for a small amount of blood to come through the dressing, but if it does not stop and the dressing becomes saturated, you should press firmly over the dressing for 10 to 15 minutes. This is usually enough to stop any bleeding. If the bleeding remains uncontrolled then contact the clinic or present to ED.

What about the risk of Infection?

Signs that your wound may have become infected usually begin 48 hours after your surgery. You would notice the following:

- Increased redness around the wound
- Becoming more painful; even after taking pain killers
- Feels hot and throbs
- May leak, ooze, or start to bleed again
- You may generally feel unwell

If you experience any of the above, then contact the clinic or GP out-of-hours service.

What about work, exercise, and other activities?

You may need some time off work, depending on the type of surgery. As far as possible you should relax following your surgery. You should avoid swimming, running and contact sports until the stitches have been removed. Avoid bending, straining, or lifting heavy objects for about 10 to 14 days.

When can I bath /shower?

You will be asked to keep the wound and dressing dry for 48 hours. After this time, you can carefully remove the top dressing and the brown tape if applied can be left in place until it falls off on its own accord. You can then take a bath or shower after the 48 hour period, but do not hold the wound directly under the shower. Dry the area by patting it dry.

When will the stitches be removed?

If external stitches are placed, then these are usually removed at the clinic between 7-14 days.

If you have dissolvable stitches, these will need no further action. Once all the dressings have either been removed or fallen off, you can then massage the site with Vaseline to help with wound healing.

Please note: We do not remove stitches over the weekend – if your stitches are due to be removed on the weekend, please make your appointment for the next business day.

What other things should I be aware of?

If you have had surgery to the face, you may experience some numbness around the wound for a few months. You may get some bruising, especially if around the eyes. This is all part of the normal healing process.

When will I get my results?

You will either be given a clinic appointment for your results, or your doctor will call with the results. Please be aware that it may be up to 2 weeks before you receive the results.

When to contact the Surgery

If you are experiencing bleeding, redness, or pain, or if you are concerned for any reason, please contact the clinic for a wound review on 4312 6666. Alternatively, if you cannot wait until then please present to your nearest hospital.