

Care of your skin graft donor area

Information for patients

This information sheet answers some of the questions you may have about caring for a skin graft donor area. It explains what you can expect when you come to hospital. If you have any other questions or concerns, please speak to the doctors or nurses caring for you.

What is a skin graft donor area?

The area from which the skin is taken from to cover your wound is called a skin graft donor area. It is similar to a graze in how it looks and feels.

Skin grafts are used to cover another area where skin is missing or damaged following traumatic injury. The surgeon shaves the top layer of skin from an undamaged area (skin graft donor area) and uses this to help close a wound. The most commonly used areas are the thighs.

Will I feel any pain?

The skin graft donor area can be quite painful, as it is a very superficial wound. It is often more painful than the skin graft wound for the first week. This will get better gradually during the next couple of weeks.

You will be given regular pain relief after the operation. You will also have some additional pain relief that you can ask the nurses for, if the regular pain relief is not enough.

Dressings

During the operation a white dressing (called Mefix[®]) is put directly onto the wound. Mefix[®] is a breathable, water-resistant, self-adhesive fabric used directly on the skin graft donor area.

To manage excess fluid, two further dressings are applied – a blue gauze, followed by another layer of the white Mefix[®] dressing. This allows your wound to heal in a sterile environment.

Care of your skin graft donor area dressing



Once the oozing has stopped, usually after 48 hours, the top two dressings will be removed (top layer of the white dressing and the blue gauze underneath) leaving you with one layer of the white Mefix® dressing (see below).



Once the top two dressings have been removed, you should then wash over the white dressing every day with soap and water. Pat off excess moisture and leave open to the air to dry. Do not be tempted to cover the white dressing.

If the area still oozes fluid, increase the washing to two or three times a day. This will help to get rid of any excess fluid and the white dressing will eventually dry.



As the edges of the dressing start to lift off these should be trimmed back to prevent catching on your bedding and clothes. Do not remove any parts of dressing that remain attached to the wound.

If the wound starts to smell or the surrounding skin starts to become red and painful – increase the washing to night and morning. If this does not get better, contact the Plastic Surgery Team on the number listed on the next page.

Healing



Once healed, the skin graft donor area will look red, purple or pink initially as it has a rich blood supply and it lacks skin pigment. It can take up to two years for the skin graft donor area to fade and return to a more normal colour.

The skin graft donor area should heal up within about two weeks, but can sometimes take longer.

Once the area has healed fully the white dressing will fall off.

Moisturising

Healed wounds and skin graft donor areas may become dry, flaky and itchy and require moisturising. This will become a very important part of your after-care as scars and newly healed skin may be much drier than your non-injured skin. This is because oil and sweat glands can be damaged by deep traumatic wounds. Moisturising and massaging can help soften scars and minimise itching.

Once healed, the area may appear dry. You can use a non-perfumed moisturiser two to three times a day to help keep the newly healed area soft.

Useful sources of information

The British Association of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery (BAPRAS) has detailed information regarding reconstructive surgery techniques used to restore the body, or the function of a specific part of the body, after trauma. Find BAPRAS reconstructive surgery patient information here:

www.bapras.org.uk/public/patient-information/reconstructive-surgery

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your skin graft donor area, please contact our Orthoplastic Clinical Nurse Specialist, Krissie Stiles. Call the hospital switchboard on **020 3299 9000** and ask for WiFi phone **38567** or email **k.stiles@nhs.net**

Krissie is available Monday and Tuesday, 8am to 8pm and Wednesday 8am to 4pm.

At other times, please contact the Senior Orthopaedic Trauma Coordinators. If you have any concerns about your bone healing, please contact our Senior Orthopaedic Trauma Coordinators, Dawn James and Emma Harris on **020 3299 5197**.

Sharing your information

King's College Hospital have teamed up with Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals in a partnership known as King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at Guy's or St Thomas'. To make sure everyone you meet always has the most up-to-date information about your health, we may share information about you between the hospitals.

Care provided by students

We provide clinical training where our students get practical experience by treating patients. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you do not want students to be involved in your care. Your treatment will not be affected by your decision.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. The PALS office is located on the ground floor of the Hambleton Wing, near the main entrance on Bessemer Road - staff will be happy to direct you.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS

Tel: 020 3299 3601

Email: kch-tr.palsdh@nhs.net

You can also contact us by using our online form at www.kch.nhs.uk/contact/pals

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact PALS on 020 3299 1844.