

CARING FOR SKIN GRAFTS

Skin grafts heal over many weeks. They leave a scar that will fade over time but there will always be a scar, it will not look like your normal skin. General postoperative care recommendations include:

ALL GRAFTS

Until your surgeon or your surgeon's nurse says it's okay to do so:

No shower or soaking in a bath

No driving

ARM, HIP or LEG

Raise the arm or leg **above the level of your heart** for much of the day and night. It is important to avoid swelling of the arm or leg as it will effect how the graft heals.

HEAD

Keep your head elevated and the area dry. Avoid stooping over or bending forwards as this can cause the area to swell and bleed.

CARE OF THE DONOR SITE

Once the skin graft is removed from the donor site a dressing is placed over the donor site. The care of the donor site will depend on the type of graft you have; split or full thickness, and the dressing that was placed in the operating room.

Full thickness grafts

This type of donor site is closed like an incision with sutures which may or may not need to be removed.

Split thickness grafts

Several types of dressings can be used to heal donor sites for a split thickness skin graft. Your surgeon will decide which type is used. It is common to have some drainage – clear yellow or red in color from a split thickness skin graft site.

Tegaderm® dressing is used for split thickness grafts – it is:

A clear plastic film that should NOT be removed. It is left in place, commonly leaks and can be reinforced with more dressings.

SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE

Contact the practice if you experience:

- Oral temperature of 38°C or higher
- Persistent, severe or increasing pain
- Bleeding from the incision that is hard to control with light pressure
- Persistent nausea or vomiting
- Excessive fluid or drainage from the incision area
- One (1) inch / 2.5cm of redness or more around the incision area
- Incision becomes warm or hot to the touch
- Foul odor from the incision area
- Swelling of the entire surgical area
- Any significant change that causes you concern

DO NOT CHANGE ANY DRESSINGS UNTIL INSTRUCTED

You will return to the clinic five to seven days after your procedure to have the dressing which protects the skin graft removed. Following this initial appointment you will be advised if any further dressing changes are needed and advised how to do this.