

Wound Care Instructions for Full Thickness Skin Graft and Donor Site

What is a full thickness skin graft?

Depending on the size and/or location of your surgical wound, it may be necessary to repair or close the wound using tissue from another area of your body. This is called **grafting**. The tissue used to cover the open wound is removed from the **donor site**, which is usually on the upper arm, collar bone, chest, neck, eyelid, or cheek. This tissue is then trimmed to fit the size and shape of the wound, and then sewn into place, this is called the **graft site**.

Graft Site Wound Care:

After the tissue has been grafted to your surgical wound, the provider will then apply a **bolster** to the area. A **bolster** is a bandage that is shaped to fit the size and shape of your graft and is sewn in place to apply **constant pressure** for a **full week**, which promotes healing. Another bandage (gauze with tape or coban wrap) will then be placed over the bolster before you go home.

- It is **imperative** that the bolster remains in place until your **suture removal appointment**.
- **Do not** get the bolster **wet**.
- **Do not** make any attempts to remove the upper bandage or bolster.
- If for any reason your bolster comes off, please contact the office so that we can make arrangements to replace it.

Donor Site Wound Care:

The donor site is closed with sutures that will need to be removed in 1 week for the eyelid or face, and in 2-3 weeks for the arm, neck, or chest. A pressure dressing, using gauze with tape or coban wrap, is applied to the site.

- It is normal for the site to feel firm or tight, but it should not be so tight as to cut off circulation.
- Should you experience numbness or tingling, or you think your bandage may be too tight, contact the office for further instructions.
- Two (2) days after surgery, you may remove the pressure dressing and begin caring for the wound **daily**.
- Gently clean the suture line with warm water and mild soap.
- Carefully remove any crusting or scabbing that may have formed over the suture line. *This may be done in the shower.*
- Cut a strip of non-stick gauze to match the size of the suture line.
- Apply ointment to the **strip** (*Vaseline or anti-bacterial ointment like Polysporin or Bacitracin*) and place over the suture line. Secure with paper tape or cover-all.
- It is important that your sutures **remain covered every day** to prevent them from drying out. *Band-Aids do not provide an airtight dressing.*

Some mild bleeding is normal. If the surgical site bleeds enough to saturate the surgical dressing, apply direct pressure right over the dressing for **30-40 minutes without releasing.**

Important Note: cigarette smoking or second hand smoke can constrict blood vessels and blood flow trying to form under your newly grafted skin. A new blood supply is necessary to insure that your new graft will survive. Please refrain from smoking or being in the presence of second hand smoke while you are healing.

If you have any questions or concerns please call:

- ATHENS 423-551-9200 CALHOUN 706-625-3909 CARTERSVILLE 470-227-1600 CHATTANOOGA 423-521-1100 CLEVELAND 423-472-3332
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