

## Care of your split skin graft to the arm

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This leaflet gives information and advice on caring for your graft wound.

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### What to expect

After any surgery, especially when performed under general anaesthetic, it is normal to feel tired.

Do not remove the dressings. Leave them in place for your follow-up Outpatients appointment. After this visit you will probably need further dressings in place for at least another week.

Please keep the dressing dry.

You may be advised to keep your arm elevated. In the daytime this will be achieved using a sling; however at night time you are advised to rest your limb on two or three pillows.

Once the area is healed:

- Wash and treat the graft as a normal part of your skin.
- Moisturise the area twice a day with a non-perfumed cream such as E45.
- Wear a support sleeve or tubigrip that has been fitted for you for two to three months. You may remove this at night after six to eight weeks.
- Continue to use your hand and shoulder joints as normal in order to prevent stiffness.
- Continue any exercises as shown by the physiotherapist.

### What NOT to do at home:

It is important to remember that you will not be able to drive or operate machinery for at least 24 hours after a general anaesthetic.

Avoid direct sunlight to the graft area. Always protect your graft by keeping the arm covered with sleeves or applying a total sun-block cream.

### Pain management after surgery

Painkillers such as Paracetamol or Ibuprofen can help reduce pain if taken on a regular basis for the first 1-2 weeks. Avoid Aspirin if possible as this may cause bleeding at the site of the operation.

### Problems to look out for

- Oozing from the wound.
- Increased pain.
- If your arm feels hot or you feel generally unwell.
- Should your dressing slip off within the first two weeks.

If you experience any of the above, contact us, your GP or practice nurse as soon as possible.

### Follow up

It is normal for your dressing to be changed two weeks following your operation. Sometimes this can be done via the nurse at your GP practice depending on the size and complexity of the dressing.

Please feel free to discuss any questions or worries you may have with your doctor. If you encounter any problems please contact us on the phone numbers below.

#### Department of Plastic Surgery

Royal Berkshire Hospital  
0118 322 7083

West Berkshire Community  
Hospital  
01635 273390

John Radcliffe Hospital  
01865 231173

Alternatively, call the ward or unit you were discharged from:

Adult Day Surgery Unit (ADSU): 0118 322 7622

Dorrell Ward: 0118 322 7172 / 8101

Visit the Trust website at [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

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