

Helping your wounds to heal

Reduce or stop smoking for at least 2 weeks before and 2 weeks after surgery. Smoking reduces the amount of oxygen carried by the blood and causes narrowing of the blood vessels. It also weakens the immune system, increasing the risk of infection.

Time off work after surgery

This will depend on where on your body you have had surgery and what your job entails. Your consultant can advise you of this.

Driving

Your ability to drive following surgery will depend on the location of the wound(s) and the advice given by your surgeon. Consider speaking to your insurance company before resuming driving.

Things to watch out for

If your wound becomes red, swollen or more painful, this could be a sign that there is a problem. Please contact us or your GP for advice.

Further information

Visit the British Association of Plastic Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons website www.bapras.org.uk/public/patient-information

Contact us

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To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

RBFT Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery,
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Advice following direct closure of a wound (wound with stitches)

Information for patients who have had plastic and reconstructive surgery

This leaflet gives advice following your plastic / reconstructive surgery. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact David Garden, Plastic Surgery Nurse Specialist on 07623 911 340 or email david.garden@royalberkshire.nhs.uk Mon-Fri 8.30am-4.30pm.

Direct closure of a wound is where the surgeon has closed the wound with 'stitches'.

Pain / discomfort

If you have had a local anaesthetic then both the area where the graft has been harvested from and where it has been placed will be numb for 4-6 hours. Normal feeling will gradually return.

If you find your wounds are becoming uncomfortable, taking simple pain relief is recommended to prevent the pain becoming too intense. If you are able, take simple Paracetamol regularly for the first 48 hours and then reduce the dose to whenever required. It is best to avoid aspirin and ibuprofen as they can cause bleeding. If you regularly take aspirin for medical reasons, you should continue this unless your consultant has advised you otherwise. If you have had a general anaesthetic,

feeling tired afterwards is normal. You will also have had local anaesthetic injected into the surgical site so which will be numb for 4-6 hours.

Bleeding

You might notice a little bit of blood staining the dressings. This is normal. However if the dressing becomes very wet or the blood is coming out from under the dressing then place another dressing on top of the original one and apply firm pressure for 10 minutes. If the bleeding continues contact us or your GP surgery for advice as soon as possible. Be aware of any sudden or gradual increase in a bleeding lump (haematoma).

Appearance

The area around your wounds will be slightly swollen and red. This is normal and will slowly reduce. To aid with this we advise you keep the operated area elevated (raised up). This will also help reduce the chance of bleeding and any pain you might have.

Head, neck and upper body: Sit upright and sleep at least 45 degrees if possible (use pillows). Avoid bending or stooping.

Arms: Keep your operated arm higher than the level of your heart. Sit with your arm on the arm rest of your chair or on a pillow during the day. At night, rest the arm on two pillows if you are able.

Legs: Continue to gently mobilise (move around) but do not stand for long periods. When sitting, raise your leg on a foot stool or on a couch with 1-2 pillows. At night, rest your leg on 1-2 pillows.

Dressings

In most cases your wound will have been closed with internal dissolvable stitches and covered with skin tape.

The tape can get wet in the shower but should not be soaked in a bath.

The tape should be allowed to come off on its own in about 2 weeks.

In some cases, your wound may have been closed with non-dissolvable stitches and may have been covered with an antibacterial ointment. If this is the case your consultant will ask you to make an appointment with your GP practice nurse to have the stitches removed. The length of time these stitches stay in, varies with the location of your wound. Your consultant will give you more information before you leave hospital. It will also be recorded on your discharge summary which the nurse will give you a copy of when you leave hospital.