

# After your skin biopsy

This leaflet explains how to take care of your wound(s) when you leave hospital. If you have any questions, please see our contact details on page two.

## Will I have any pain?

The local anaesthetic will begin to wear off about 30-40 minutes after the operation. If you experience any discomfort from your wound, you can take simple painkillers such as paracetamol to help with this.

**Always follow the instructions on the packet and never take more than the recommended dose.**

Check that the painkillers will not react with any other medicines you are taking. If you are unsure or if you have allergies to any medicines, speak to your pharmacist.

## How should I look after my wound?

- Keep your dressing dry for the first 24 – 48 hours depending on the nurse instructions.
- After 24 – 48 hours remove your dressing and **wash the wound with soap and water** (shampoo if on the scalp), either by washing in a shower or by splashing the treated area with warm soapy water. The dressing may be easier to remove if you wet it first. Flowing water will help to remove any scabs that may have formed.
- **Gently pat your wound dry.**
- **Apply a thin layer of clean Vaseline®** (or antibiotic ointment if it has been prescribed for you) directly over your stitches with your **clean hands**. This will help to keep your wound clean and moist and will prevent scabs from forming.
- **Apply a waterproof plaster (not fabric) directly over the wound.**
- Repeat this routine **every day, once a day** until the stitches are removed by your practice nurse, or if there are no stitches, until the wound has completely healed over.

## Bruising

This is common, especially if the area of your biopsy was close to your eyes. To help the bruising to heal, avoid taking aspirin, unless your GP has prescribed this.

## Bleeding

It is unlikely that your wound will bleed, but if this happens, don't panic. Sit down and press firmly over the dressing for 15 minutes. If you are at all worried, please phone the hospital using the contact details in this leaflet. In the unlikely event you have **uncontrollable bleeding**, please contact your GP or go to your local A&E Department.

## Signs of infection: what to look out for

It is expected that your wound will be slightly red and tender to touch for the first couple of days after your surgery, but if the wound becomes **very painful, very hot, very red and swollen**, **please contact your GP** as soon as possible, as these may be signs of infection and you may need antibiotics.

## Smoking

Try to avoid smoking for the first week after your surgery. Smoking significantly delays wound healing. It increases the risk of infection and can contribute to a more prominent scar. If you would like help giving up smoking, please speak to your nurse or call the NHS Smoking Helpline on 0800 169 0169.

## Will I have a follow-up appointment?

You will be given a follow-up appointment on the day of your biopsy **only if necessary**. This will vary from patient to patient. Please check with the nurse before you leave.

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your biopsy, please contact **Guy's Dermatology Outpatient Department** on **020 7188 7188 ext 86418** (9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday). **This is not an emergency service.**

**Dermatological Surgery and Laser Unit (DSLU) St Thomas' hospital** offers an answerphone service on **020 7188 6284** between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. Please leave a message with your name and telephone number and someone will get back to you as soon as possible. **This is not an emergency service.**

**In an emergency, please contact your GP or go to your local A&E Department.**

## Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

**t:** 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

## Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

**e:** 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas'    **t:** 020 7188 8803 at Guy's    **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

## Language Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch using the following contact details.

**t:** 020 7188 8815    **fax:** 020 7188 5953

## NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

**w:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

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