

Caring for your wound after micrographic (Mohs) surgery

This leaflet explains how to look after your wound after Mohs micrographic surgery. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

When can I leave hospital?

Once a dressing has been applied after your surgery you will be able to go home, if you feel fit and well enough to do so. We strongly advise you to have someone to accompany you home and that you travel in a car or taxi only. Please try to avoid public transport if possible.

After I leave hospital

You will be able to eat and drink as normal. You will be able to take your medications as normal, unless instructed otherwise. Please keep alcohol to a minimum for the first 48 hours as this can encourage the wound to bleed. Avoid strenuous exercise, such as running, bending, straining or lifting heavy objects for the first few days after your surgery as these activities can occasionally cause bleeding to re-start.

Looking after my wound

You will have a surgical wound with stitches in. Once your surgery is complete we will put a pressure dressing over the wound which should stay in place for 24 / 48 hours depending on the nurses instructions.

- After 24 / 48 hours remove your pressure dressing and **wash the wound with soap and water** (or shampoo if on the scalp), either by washing in a shower or by splashing your face 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 water proof plaster (not fabric) directly over the wound.**
- Repeat this routine **every day, once a day until the stitches are removed** at your follow up appointment.

Preventing bleeding and reducing swelling

It is normal to have some bruising or bleeding at your wound site for the first few hours. If you are bleeding, don't panic. Sit down and:

- Put **constant pressure** on the dressing over your wound for **15 minutes**.
- **Do not take aspirin** unless instructed to do so by your doctor, as this thins the blood and makes bleeding and bruising more likely.
- In the unlikely event that you have **uncontrollable bleeding** once you have gone home, please contact your GP or go to your local A&E.

If you have bruising and swelling:

- Make an **ice pack** by putting some ice-cubes in a plastic bag or wrapping a packet of frozen peas in a cloth. Apply this to your wound, over the dressing for 15 minutes at regular intervals for the first day if you can. This regular cooling will reduce swelling around your wound.
- Sleeping with your **head raised** on several pillows for the first couple of nights will help to reduce swelling further, especially around the eyes.

Will I have any pain?

There will be some expected tenderness. If you feel you need painkillers, take paracetamol only or the painkillers we have prescribed for you. **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 medication you are taking and speak to your pharmacist if you have allergies to any medications.

Signs of infection

It is expected that your wound will be slightly red and tender to touch for the first couple of days after surgery, but if the wound becomes **very painful, very hot, very red and swollen**, please contact the department on 020 7188 6284 and leave a message. We will advise you if you need to see your GP or visit us, as these may be signs of infection.

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 0 169.

Will I have a follow-up appointment?

You will be given a follow-up appointment before you go home after surgery. If the doctors in the Dermatological Surgery and Laser Unit closed your wound, you will have a follow-up appointment at St Thomas'. At your follow-up appointment you will be seen by a nurse who will take out any stitches (if appropriate) and you will be seen by a doctor who will check that the wound is healing well. Photographs will be taken at this stage.

If you were referred to another hospital to have the wound closed, that hospital would be responsible for your follow-up appointments and subsequent wound care.

Contact us

If you have any questions about your wound, please contact the Dermatological Surgery and Laser Unit (DSLU) on **020 7188 6284** (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday). Please leave your name and telephone number, and someone will contact you as soon as possible.

Alternatively, you can contact the paging system between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. Please telephone **0844 822 2888**, pager number **881893**.

These are non-emergency numbers.

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:

t: 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas' **t:** 020 7188 8803 at Guy's **e:** 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 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

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

Become a member of your local hospitals, and help shape our future

Membership is free and it is completely up to you how much you get involved. To become a member of our Foundation Trust, you need to be 18 years of age or over, live in Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham, Wandsworth or Westminster or have been a patient at either hospital in the last five years. To join:

t: 0848 143 4017 **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk

w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk