



PREPARING FOR SURGERY

Being prepared will greatly help to optimise your healing following surgery.

Before having surgery, you should carefully consider whether or not you need to:

- take time off work.
- have someone drive you home after surgery
- rest for an extended period. (eg. lying down or sitting with your leg elevated)
- organise help around the house while you rest.
- prepare meals in advance. This prevents long periods of standing.
- have pain relief. (eg Panadol™ / Avoid Aspirin and Anti-inflammatory Drugs)
- return to the Clinic for dressing changes or for wound inspections
- have further surgery later on. (most lesions do not require any further surgery)

You can use regular shampoo and face wash anytime prior to surgery

- Do NOT use any perfumes, lotions, creams, or gels prior to surgery.

If the area is hairy consider shaving the area 48 hours before the operation but do NOT shave the surgical area in the 24 hours prior to surgery.

Food / Drink

- Avoid food and drink in the 2 hours prior to surgery.
- Aim to have an empty bladder prior to surgery.

Medication

- It is important to take all medications as usual, unless directed otherwise.
- If you take fish oil / krill oil, please stop taking this for the week before surgery if possible.
- If you wish, take pain killers / analgesia an hour or so before surgery

Minor bleeding occurs in almost all cases of surgery.

Continue all prescribed blood thinners. eg Aspirin / Warfarin / Plavix / Iscover / Asasantin

Smoking impairs healing of the wound - consider stopping or reducing smoking at least 12 hours before surgery and for at least a week afterwards.

THE DAY OF SURGERY

Clothing and footwear should be clean, loose and comfortable.

- Do NOT come straight from a hot and dusty workplace - have a shower first.
- If your surgery is on the face or scalp consider wearing clean but older, darker clothes in case of bleeding during the procedure.

Driving home after your operation. Before surgery please check with the doctor if :

- You will NOT be able to drive. Ask a friend or relative to drive you.
- You should be able to drive home unless there are unexpected complications.

The risk of post-operative wound infections is around 5%. Various medical conditions can contribute to the risk of Infection – Eg. Diabetes / Poor Nutritional Status.

Antibiotics are not routinely given in skin surgery. Antibiotics are only given for those areas considered high risk for infection, particularly with large skin flaps and skin grafts. These areas usually involve the Ear / Nose / Lip / Groin and Lower Leg.

AFTER SURGERY

Following your operation, you can expect:

Some pain and slight discomfort.

- Take paracetamol (Panadol™) as directed.
- Applying a cool pack and pressure helps with the discomfort.
- Avoid Aspirin based pain relief and anti-inflammatories (eg. Nurofen™)

Mild oozing and even bleeding. When this occurs you should

- Apply pressure with a cool pack for 15 – 20 minutes each hour.
- Keep the area elevated if possible. The bleeding will usually settle.

Bruising and swelling increasing over the first two days and then settling. This is particularly evident around the eyes with surgery on the face or forehead.

The initial dressing covers the wound for 2 days and stitches are removed after 5-14 days depending on the operation and it's location.

General Notes for Wound Healing:

- For most wounds you will be asked to keep the wound dry and covered for the first 2 days, but on the scalp this is keep dry for first 24 hours then shower.
- From day 3 daily showers aid the healing process.
- AVOID using Soaps / Creams / Antiseptics (eg - Betadine™, Savlon™, Dettol™)
- DRY dressings minimise the risk of infection.
- If the wound dressing becomes WET, it should be changed.

WOUND / SCAR MANAGEMENT

When are the stitches removed?

Skin stitches are usually removed 5-14 days after surgery. The time varies according to body site. Deep stitches are sometimes felt as small lumps under a healing wound. They do not need to be removed and are usually absorbed by the body over 3-4 months. Healing skin requires up to 6 months to regain most of its strength.

Will Lower Leg Surgery interfere with my mobility ?

Healing difficulties below the knee occur in about 10% of people. Swelling in the first 2-3 weeks after surgery can be minimised by

- Keeping the leg elevated
- Compression Stockings / Bandages / Tubigrip™
- Avoiding long periods of standing or sitting
- Avoiding exercise or stretching of the wound
- Protecting the Wound from any direct trauma

How can I reduce scarring?

After the stitches are removed

- A supportive skin tape dressing is applied directly to the wound eg Fixomul™ or Skin tape such as Micropore. This can be purchased at pharmacies or from us.
- Shower as normal. Leave the tape/strips on your skin for as long as possible.
- Additional Fixomul™ from your pharmacy can be re-applied up to three months.

After 2 weeks (and only if the skin is clean and dry), using either:

- Vitamin E oil or cream - lightly massaged into the healing wound
 - Bio-Oil™ - (Twice Daily x 3 Months)
- Silicon based dressings
 - Dermatix™ - (Twice Daily x 2 Months)
 - CicaCare™ - (Once Daily x 3 Months)

The wound is red. Is this normal?

- Wound edges may be slightly red and is part of the normal healing process

Call the Doctor if:

- The redness is increasing or spreading more than 1cm from the wound edge.
- The wound is becoming more painful or increasingly tender to touch
- There is pus in the wound

When do I remove the outer bandage wrap? (if applied)

A fabric bandage wrap is often applied over a limb dressing to reduce bleeding and swelling and also to protect the wound. This bandage (NOT the dressing) should be removed the day after surgery, unless otherwise instructed. Most wounds do not require a bandage after 24 hours.

Should I limit my activities?

Avoid activities that could cause your scar to pull apart in the first few weeks after surgery. Limiting movement of the wound area will aid in wound healing.

- Avoid lifting, straining, contact sports, intense exercise
- Avoid swimming if you have stitches in place.

Should I avoid sun exposure?

A healing scar will darken and be more noticeable if it gets sunburnt.

- Limit your sun exposure for the first 6 months after surgery
- When outdoors, cover your scar with tape or sunscreen

If you have any concerns, please contact the clinic