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**Skin Surgery:
Before and after
your procedure**



Patient information

Skin Surgery: Before and after your procedure



Excellent patient care, together

Please read this leaflet carefully before you attend for your procedure

You have been scheduled an appointment for your skin surgery procedure. Please see your appointment letter for the hospital where this is booked.

PLEASE NOTE: Your procedure may be at a different hospital to where you may have seen your Dermatologist.

When you arrive at your designated hospital please report to:

- Hemel Hempstead Hospital: Verulam Wing, Main Outpatients Reception, 1st Floor
- St. Albans City Hospital: Gloucester Wing Reception, Ground Floor
- Watford General Hospital: Dermatology Department Reception, H-Block Ground Floor

If you need to cancel or change your appointment, please contact us as soon as possible:

Watford: 07867 668079

Hemel Hempstead and St Albans: 07824 065479

E-mail: westherts.dermminorops@nhs.net

***Please include your Date of Birth and NHS number in your email if known**

***Please DO NOT call the Trust's Outpatients department to change your appointment.**

Before you come for your procedure

- You may **eat and drink normally** on the day of your procedure.
- It is advisable for someone to bring you and collect you from your appointment, particularly if the procedure is on your face, head, neck, lower leg or foot.
- Please do not bring babies and small children without an additional carer – they cannot be looked after in the clinic.
- Please **continue any usual medications** unless your Dermatologist has advised you otherwise. This includes if you are taking any **blood thinning medication**, unless your Dermatologist has advised you to stop (you will be instructed accordingly).
- If you have any of the following and have not already informed your Dermatologist, please contact us **before** you attend (see **Surgery Appointment Queries** e-mail/telephone at the end of this leaflet):
 - an implanted cardiac Pacemaker or Defibrillator
 - a cochlear implant
 - a disorder that means you may have bleeding problems (not related to blood thinning medication) eg if you are under the care of Haematology
 - an allergy specifically to local anaesthetic, rubber (latex), or Iodine

About your procedure

Before the operation is carried out, the procedure will be explained to you and you will be asked to sign a consent form, giving your permission for your procedure. A local anaesthetic, which numbs the skin, will be injected into the skin around the operation site.

You will have been advised in advance by your Dermatologist which procedure(s) is planned:

Ellipse Excision: The skin lesion is cut out completely, and the wound is stitched and dressed. This eventually leaves a permanent pale scar line which is at least two-three times longer than the lesion.

Punch biopsy or Incisional biopsy: A small sample of skin is removed, and the wound is stitched and dressed. Aftercare is as for excision as there are stitches placed in the skin.

Shave, Curettage and Cautery: The skin lesion is shaved and/or scraped off the skin surface, and the wound is sealed with heat (electric cautery). There are no stitches.

Excision and Skin Graft: The skin lesion is cut out completely, and a small piece of skin (donor skin) is also cut out from another area (such as the collar, or behind the ear). It's stitched in place to cover where the lesion was removed (skin graft).

Excision and Skin Flap: The skin lesion is cut out completely, and the adjacent skin is rotated into the wound to cover the open area and stitched in place.

Stitches:

If you have stitches, they will either be dissolving or will require removal at a later date – you will be advised following your procedure. Note that in larger wounds you may have a layer of dissolving stitches deep in the skin. This can be felt for around 3 months before they dissolve.

- **Dissolving stitches:** If visible on the skin surface, these stitches are like soft white cotton thread and will fall out by themselves. This may take up to six weeks on average. Sometimes the dissolving stitches are all placed under the skin and will not be visible.
- **Non-dissolving stitches:** These will be seen on the skin surface (blue or black) and will typically need to be removed 7 days (above the neck) or up to 14 days (below the neck). Stitch removal is usually to be arranged by you with your Practice Nurse at your local GP Surgery (unless otherwise arranged after your procedure).

How to look after your wound and what to look out for during healing:

- Keep the wound covered and dry for 48 hours if stitched, and 5-7 days if cauterised (or as instructed after your procedure).
- After this, shower as normal, pat the wound dry (don't rub) and reapply a plaster or dressing if preferred (obtained from the chemist). Do not leave a wet dressing on your wound.
- Where possible, you should keep the operated area elevated for at least 2-3 days (e.g. arm or leg), and avoid excessive exertion, as swelling and bleeding may be more likely.
- Avoid touching or picking the scar or scab.
- If you have Steristrips (paper strips) applied over your wound you can leave these until they peel away by themselves, otherwise you can gently peel off after 7 days.
- Moisturise the scar as recommended below.

***If you have bleeding from your wound:** Keep the dressing on and **apply firm pressure for 10 minutes** with your hand and something absorbent over the top, such as a towel. Once it stops you can then carefully replace the dressing.

These things are **normal**:

- Minor pain or discomfort. Take paracetamol (avoid aspirin and ibuprofen-containing painkillers which can cause more bruising if taken regularly)
- Localised swelling and bruising around the wound site
- Minor bleeding is usually absorbed by your dressing.
- Minor redness around the wound with **no** pain or fever or spreading redness

These things are **NOT normal**, and **medical advice should be sought if you have:**

- Severe or increasing pain, not relieved by taking regular paracetamol
- Significant bleeding that doesn't stop with pressure
- Extensive bruising or swelling
- The wound coming open
- Increasing redness, pain, discharge or a fever may indicate a wound infection

***If you have any concerns with your wound, see **Where to get help** at the end of this leaflet.**

Important

To prevent infection or your wound breaking open (dehiscence), please consider:

- Wounds in certain areas can be under **high tension and strain**, e.g. back, shoulders, leg and around joints. You are therefore advised to **avoid** strenuous exercise, heavy lifting, bending, swimming, or any activities or sports that may add extra strain to the affected area (this may include avoiding running, gym, racket sports, golf, and some strenuous jobs) for up to four weeks following your procedure, or as advised after your procedure.
- If you have any **holidays/sporting activities** arranged within **four weeks** after your procedure appointment, your procedure may need to be rescheduled, or your activities postponed. Please contact the **Surgery Appointment Queries** e-mail or telephone (found at the bottom of this leaflet) if you may need to reschedule your procedure
- Swimming, saunas, jacuzzies, and soaking in a bath should be avoided for four weeks after your procedure to prevent infection

Face/Head

Procedures on the face or head can be more prone to swelling, bruising and bleeding. You should keep your head up for 2-3 days, including at bedtime (you can use extra pillows). Avoid bending and strenuous activity as stated above.

Lower legs

- Please **do not drive** to your surgery appointment if you are having stitches in your leg
- You can walk as normal, but avoid prolonged standing (more than 30 minutes)
- When sitting, elevate your leg above hip height to help reduce swelling and aid healing
- You may be given a tubigrip stocking to wear from toes to knee (wear like a full-length sock). Wear this for two weeks during the day. It may be removed at night and handwashed
- You may be advised to avoid driving for up to two weeks after your procedure if you have stitches in your leg. Please consider this when preparing for your procedure

Long term care of your scar

All scars are permanent and can take 12-18 months to finally settle.

For best scar healing you are advised to **moisturise your scar** twice daily. Use clean Vaseline petroleum jelly, Bio-oil, or moisturiser after 7 days on the face, neck or head, and after 14 days if below the neck. After 4 weeks, when the scar is a little stronger, you can massage more firmly with your moisturiser using circular motions. Continue this for several months.

Cauterised scabs can be moisturised after 7 days.

Avoid exposing your scar to direct sunlight for 12 months and use sunblock SPF 50+.

Your Results

You will receive your results by letter within 6-8 weeks after your procedure. Your Dermatologist may arrange a telephone call or a clinic appointment to give your results (you will be advised). If you have not received your results after eight weeks, please contact:
westherts.dermatologysecretaries@nhs.net.

Where to get help

If you have any concerns with your wound or wound healing following your procedure, please use the following contact information.

- **For ROUTINE Dermatology WOUND QUERIES (08.30 to 16:00 Monday to Friday):**

Watford patients: 01923 217655

Hemel Hempstead and St Albans patients: 01442 287467

If you hear the answer machine, **please leave a message including your name, date of birth, NHS number if known, and a brief description of your concern**, and one of our nurses will call you back as soon as possible.

***Note: Wound checks may take place at any one of our hospitals, depending on appointment availability/urgency**

- **For URGENT or OUT OF HOURS WOUND QUERIES (after 16:00 on weekdays, at weekends or Bank Holidays):**

Please contact **111** or attend your local **Urgent Care Centre**. Please only attend the Emergency Department if you have a severe problem or if you have been unsuccessful with accessing the previous options

- **SURGERY APPOINTMENT Queries (08:30 to 14:00 Monday to Friday):**
THIS IS NOT for wound queries

Watford patients: 07867 668079

Hemel Hempstead and St Albans patients: 07824 065479

E-mail: westherts.dermminorops@nhs.net ***Please include your Date of Birth and NHS number in your email if known**

Dermatology

Watford General Hospital

Dermatology Centre, H-Block
Vicarage Road
Watford
Hertfordshire
WD18 0HB
Hospital switchboard: 01923 244366

Dermatology

Hemel Hempstead Hospital

Verulam Wing
Hillfield Road
Hemel Hempstead
Hertfordshire
HP2 4AD
Hospital switchboard: 01442 213141

Dermatology

St. Albans City Hospital

Outpatients Department
Waverley Road
St. Albans
Hertfordshire
AL3 5PN
Hospital switchboard: 01727 866122

PALS

If you need this leaflet in another **language, large print, Braille or audio version**, please call **01923 217198** or e-mail westherts.pals@nhs.net.



Language



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Survey - Friends & Family Test

We welcome feedback about your care, this feedback is shared with all staff so that we can improve patients' experience. Click this [link](#), scan the QR code with your smartphone or type in: bit.ly/4o3QVFJ.



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