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## Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery

# Split skin grafting for local anaesthetic day cases

### Before your operation

If you have a wound from surgery, or an excision of a lesion, burn or non healing wound, your doctor may explain that you require a procedure known as a split skin graft to ensure that it heals.

The operation may be performed under general or local anaesthetic which will be discussed with you beforehand by your surgeon and/or anaesthetist.

### The operation

A Split Skin Graft (SSG) involves the transfer of the top layer of skin, usually taken from the thigh or the inner arm, known as the donor site, to the affected area. This will leave a raw area of skin which will require dressings.

A Full Thickness Skin Graft (FTSG) is similar to the above but involves the transfer of a deeper layer of skin. This wound is normally taken from the neck area, behind the ear or upper arm, depending on where the skin is being moved to. The donor area is then directly closed using dissolvable sutures.

### After your operation

- Your skin graft will be covered with a padded dressing which may be held in place by stitches.
- After five to seven days the dressing is removed and the wound is inspected by a nurse in the Plastic Surgery Unit or the dressing clinic held in Clinic 7.
- After the first graft check has been performed, you will be advised as to whether you need further wound dressings. These may be carried out in the hospital or at your GP surgery.
- Following a SSG you will have a padded dressing on the donor site Unless this dressing becomes soiled it will stay undisturbed for 10-14 days.

- Following a FTSG you will have steri-strips and a light dressing over the donor site. This is usually removed during your first skin graft check at five to seven days then replaced if necessary.
- If the skin graft has been applied to a leg or arm wound you may be asked to keep the limb elevated following your surgery. If the affected area is on the head, neck or upper body you will be advised to avoid heavy lifting, bending and strain, and if possible to sleep more upright (not flat) for at least the first 24 to 48 hours. Elevation is very important for the healing of the wound.
- If you have stitches they are usually dissolvable. If non dissolvable stitches have been used they will be removed by either the Plastic Surgery team or the local practise nurse. This will be discussed with you prior to discharge.
- You will experience scarring from the skin graft and possibly skin discolouration at the donor site dependant upon the procedure performed. This will be discussed fully with you during consent.
- Longer term wound healing will be discussed with you during your dressing clinic outpatient appointments which will include the application of aqueous/E45 cream to your donor site to promote wound healing.



We are currently working towards a smoke-free site. Smoking is only permitted in the designated smoking areas.

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## Help with this leaflet:



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## Document history

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