

CALGARY SKIN CANCER CENTRE

#316 – 3320 17<sup>th</sup> AVE SW  
CALGARY, AB T3E 0B4  
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**Patient Post-Operative Aftercare Instructions – SKIN GRAFT CARE**

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

Your skin graft and donor site have both been bandaged with a WHITE gauze pressure dressing

**\*DO NOT SHOWER OR GET THE DRESSING WET UNTIL IT IS TIME TO REMOVE THE PRESSURE DRESSING.**

**SKIN GRAFT SITE:** \_\_\_\_\_

Your WHITE gauze pressure dressing can be removed after \_\_\_\_ hours. Wash your hands prior to removal.

There will be a WHITE COTTON BALL bolster sutured on top of the grafted area. **PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE THIS.** Gently apply \_\_\_\_\_ ointment onto and around the bolster with a clean finger. Repeat this 2-3 times daily until your bolster dressing and sutures are removed. Bolster is to be removed in \_\_\_\_ days.

\*The cotton ball will turn brown/grey/yellow in colour over the coming days. This is normal. **DO NOT BUMP OR MOVE THE COTTON BALL.** The graft is very fragile in the initial few days as it develops new blood vessels to the underlying wound bed. **Poor nutrition, smoking, strenuous activity, poor hygiene, as well as the presence of infection and bleeding in the skin graft can adversely affect the survival of the grafted tissue. \***

**At this point, you are now ok to have a shower.**

**DONOR SITE:** \_\_\_\_\_

Your WHITE gauze pressure dressing can be removed after \_\_\_\_ hours. Wash your hands prior to removal. The area where the skin graft was taken from (not the area where the graft was placed), will have steri-strips over the incision or sutures.

Steri-strips – After the pressure dressing is removed, you will see little white tapes across the incision called Steri-strips. These can be left alone and will fall off in 7-10 days. If they have not come off after 14 days, you can gently remove them by getting them moist with a bit of mineral oil or hydrogen peroxide. **You are now ok to have a shower and get the steri-strips wet.**

Sutures – After pressure dressing is removed, **you are now ok to have a shower and get the sutures wet.** Wash the area gently with warm water and mild antibacterial soap (ie. Dial Antibacterial foaming soap). Then apply a thin layer of \_\_\_\_\_ ointment and cover with a Band-Aid or non-stick Telfa dressing and medical tape. Repeat this process once daily for \_\_\_\_ days. Sutures are to be removed in \_\_\_\_ days.

**DISCOMFORT**

If you have discomfort following surgery, take 1000mg Acetaminophen (two Extra Strength Tylenol®) every 6 hours (do not exceed 4000mg in 24 hours) OR a prescription pain medication if one has been prescribed to you. If this is not sufficient to control the pain, please call the office. **AVOID Aspirin** for the first week after surgery, and avoid medications that contain ibuprofen, naproxen and Celebrex (e.g. Aleve®, Excedrin®, Advil®, Motrin®) for 72 hours, as these products increase the risk of bleeding.

**ACTIVITY**

**Please avoid strenuous activity/exercise and heavy lifting with your full body for the next three (3) days in order to reduce your risk of bleeding and wound complications that will delay healing.** This includes bending, lifting anything over 5 pounds, straining, going to the gym, golf, walking for exercise, yard work, housework, etc. or doing any type of activity that will increase your heart rate/blood pressure or cause stretching in the area the surgery was done. Additional activity restrictions:

## THINGS TO WATCH FOR:

### **BLEEDING**

Your incision MAY ooze or bleed lightly within the first 48 hours after your procedure, especially if you take blood thinners. Your pressure dressing will help reduce this. However, if you have mild bleeding, it is not a cause for concern. **DO NOT REMOVE YOUR PRESSURE DRESSING.** You can control the bleeding with firm pressure for 30 minutes over top of the dressing. If you are experiencing excessive bleeding that is coming through your dressing and you are not able to get it to stop with firm pressure, please call the **24-hour emergency number at (403) 620-2424** and continue to apply pressure while proceeding to your nearest ER or Urgent Care Centre. If you have been hospitalized for **any reason** within the 10 days after your procedure, please notify our staff as soon as possible at (403) 700-0110, extension 3.

### **SWELLING**

Swelling is common after surgery. Apply an ice pack around the surgical site and dressing – for 10 minutes every 1 hour, until you go to bed. You may continue this, if necessary, as long as the swelling persists. This will help with swelling, pain, and bruising. Sleep with your head elevated by using extra pillows or a recliner chair for 3 days.

### **INFECTION**

**Please notify us immediately if you see any signs of infection (excessive redness, swelling, yellow drainage, if the wound site becomes warm), or if the pain starts to get worse instead of better (after the first 48 hours). 403-700-0110, extension 3**

### FOLLOW-UP

**If you have any questions or concerns during the healing process, please contact our Nursing Triage line at 403-700-0110, extension 3 \*Please note messages are checked throughout the day between surgeries.**

Follow-up at Calgary Skin Cancer Centre in \_\_\_\_\_ weeks

\*Follow-up at Calgary Skin Cancer Centre is not routinely required. Should you have any concerns about your wound healing, appearance of your scar, recovery, or any other concerns, **please contact us to discuss your concerns (403-700-0110 ext. 3).**

**Contact your referring physician, \_\_\_\_\_ to schedule your next skin check.**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Sun/Radiation Protection:**

- **Non-sunscreen options:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **Sunscreen:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Scar Care:**

- **Product:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **Massage:** Start in \_\_\_\_ weeks. Massage for 5 minutes in a firm, circular motion all along and around the surgical site 5 times per day for 3 months.

### **Skin Care:**

- **AM:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **PM:** \_\_\_\_\_