

# Valley Skin Cancer Surgery

## Dermatologic and Mohs Micrographic Surgery

### Post-operative (after surgery) instructions from Dr. Katherine Lim Quan

#### Wound Care for Side to Side Closure or Flap Closure:

- Keep the surgical wound dry for the first 24-48 hours.
- You may shower 24-48 hours after the procedure.
- After 24 hours, remove the bandage and gently cleanse the area with full strength hydrogen peroxide for the FIRST CLEANING ONLY(only if readily available, otherwise do what follows).Thereafter, cleanse with water (and very little mild soap) and blot dry with gauze.
- As you clean the area, gently remove any crusty material. If you cannot easily remove the crust, soak the area with wet gauze for 20 minutes to soften the crust.
- Use cotton-tipped swabs to apply petroleum jelly to the area. There is no need to use a large quantity, just a minute amount to prevent crusting in the first 2-3 days.
- During the daytime, you may leave the wound open to the air as long as the wound is kept covered with ointment (petroleum jelly or Aquaphor). Alternatively, the wound can be covered with a band-aid or non-stick dressing for protection when out or overnight.
- After the sutures (stitches) are removed, you no longer need to apply ointment.

#### Wound Care for Second Intent Healing:

- After 24 hours, remove the bandage and gently cleanse the area with full strength hydrogen peroxide for the FIRST CLEANING ONLY(only if readily available, otherwise do what follows).Thereafter, cleanse with water (and very little mild soap) and blot dry with gauze.
- As you clean the area, gently remove any crusty material. If you cannot easily remove the crust, soak the area with wet gauze for 20 minutes to soften the crust. Do not let thick crusts or scabs form. Your wound will heal faster if you keep it clean and moist.
- Keeping the wound moist with ointment will prevent formation of crusts or scabs that may slow down healing. During the daytime, you may leave the wound open to the air as long as the wound is kept covered with ointment (petroleum jelly or Aquaphor) at all times. Alternatively, the ointment can be kept in place by covering the area with a band-aid or non-stick dressing. Cover the wound at night to keep the ointment in place.

#### Wound Care if you had a Skin Graft Placed:

- For the graft site, leave the bandage on and keep it dry (avoid showering) until sutures are removed.
- If there is minor bleeding noted, apply pressure over the area (including bandage) for 20 minutes until the bleeding stops. Apply pressure for another 20 minutes if there should still be bleeding. If the bleeding continues, contact the office.
- For the donor site (the place that the graft is borrowed from), do the appropriate wound cleaning for side to side closure or second intention healing as noted above.

#### Activity:

- If you have stitches or sutures, avoid strenuous activities and exercise until your sutures are removed.
- If your surgery was on your **head or neck**, keep your head higher than the rest of your body for the first 2 days (use extra pillow for sleep and avoid bending head down to pick up things or tie your shoes). If your surgery was on your **arm/hand/fingers or legs**, elevate on pillows and avoid immersion in water(bath, dishes, laundry, pool, fish tank)

#### Discomfort:

- Avoid aspirin or ibuprofen for 4-5 days after the surgery, unless prescribed/approved by your physician.
- You may take acetaminophen (Tylenol) if needed for discomfort. If acetaminophen does not relieve your discomfort, contact the office.

#### Bleeding, Bruising and Swelling:

- Your wound may ooze a small amount of blood. If your wound bleeds enough that the blood soaks through to the outside of your bandage, do the following:
  1. Place clean gauze on top of the bloody bandage. Do not remove the bandage.
  2. Apply continuous pressure on the gauze, directly over the wound, for 20 minutes.
  3. If bleeding continues after 20 minutes, apply continuous firm pressure for another 20 minutes.
  4. If bleeding continues after two attempts of applying continuous pressure for 20 minutes, contact the office or go to the nearest emergency room.
  5. Bruising and swelling in the surgical area tends to be most noticeable in the first 1-2 days after surgery and will lessen over time.
  6. Ice compresses (or frozen vegetables) over the bandage for 15 minutes several times a day may help to minimize the swelling.
  7. If the swelling does not improve within a week or if the area becomes increasingly tender, contact the office.

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**Infection:**

- Expect your wound to be slightly sore and pink.
- If the area becomes increasingly tender, red or warm, contact the office.
- If you have a fever (temperature above 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius), chills or pus draining from your wound, contact the office and the Mohs surgeon will be notified.

**Dietary Restrictions.**

- Avoid alcoholic beverages for 4 days after your surgery.
- If your surgery involved your lips or mouth, avoid hot liquids and foods for the first 2 hours after surgery. Eat soft foods for the first 3 days after surgery.
- Do not smoke for at least 2 weeks after surgery.

**Special Instructions:**

- For certain wounds and/or locations, an antiseptic solution may be utilized for the cleansing of the wound instead of water and mild soap.
- Using household white vinegar, make a dilute solution using 1 teaspoon to a pint of water and set it aside for daily cleansing.
- You might be given or asked to obtain a special dressing called Adaptic. This mesh dressing may be trimmed to the size of the wound and placed on the wound after application of petroleum jelly or Aquaphor. During the day, this can be the only bandage on the wound, but you can also reinforce with outer bandage during the night or when going out.

**When to contact the Mohs surgeon:**

- You have a fever (temperature above 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius).
- Your wound continues to bleed after you have applied firm pressure for 40 minutes.
- Acetaminophen has not relieved your discomfort.
- Your wound becomes increasingly sore, tender, red or warm.
- Bruising or swelling does not improve within a few days after first appearing.
- You have questions or concerns about your wound or your recovery from surgery.

If you have questions or concerns, please call during business hours 8 to 3:30 pm, Monday through Thursday or 8 to 1:30 pm on Friday. If you need to reach the on-call physician that cannot wait until next business day, call (480) 214-0388, option 7 and leave a message. If you are not contacted within two hours, please call again.

If you think you **need urgent medical care** for any reason, immediately go to your local **emergency department**.