

Patient Information – Minor Skin Surgery

Department of Dermatology

The doctor will have explained to you that you need a small skin operation. This leaflet is intended to explain the procedure and to answer some of the questions often asked.

Before arriving for you operation

You may eat and drink as normal before and after attending the department for minor surgery. It is usually better to bring someone with you to take you home afterwards but this is left at the discretion of the individual.

What will happen when I arrive?

On arrival to the department, please report to the reception desk where you will be asked to check that the details held for you are correct. You will then be asked to wait in the waiting room until a nurse takes you to the room where you will have your operation. The doctor or nurse who will be performing the operation will explain the procedure and answer any questions you may have. You will then be asked to sign a consent form. It is important to inform the doctor/nurse if you have taken any new medication since your last visit.

Will I have an anaesthetic?

Your operation will be performed under local anaesthetic which means that you will be awake throughout the procedure. An injection, which gives a short-lived stinging sensation, is given to the area that is to be operated on. This numbs the area so that you should not feel any pain; just touching or pulling. A nurse will accompany you throughout the procedure. Should you feel any discomfort during the operation, please let the nurse know.

What happens next?

The procedure will take approximately 20 minutes. If you have sutures (stitches), the doctor or nurse will tell you when these are to be removed; this is usually from between five days to three weeks depending on the site of your operation. You will need to make an appointment at your GP surgery for the practice nurse to remove them.

Whilst the stitches are in, any undue strain on the wound site could cause it to open; you should therefore avoid excessive physical activity until the stitches are removed.

Post-operative pain varies for each person and depends on what sort of operation you have had. A painkiller, such as paracetamol (if you are not allergic to it) should control any discomfort.

Complications

Scar

Any surgery to the skin will lead to some form of scar. In some areas (especially on the shoulders, upper back and chest) there may be a thickened, red and possibly sore and/or itchy scar called a keloid scar. Keloid scars are difficult to treat but may improve with the application of topical steroid ointment or injections. Scars in some areas under tension may spread so that the resultant scar is wider than it was immediately after the operation. Little can be done to prevent this.

Infection

Wound infections are uncommon, but must be treated as soon as possible with an oral antibiotic to prevent damage to the wound and a subsequent poor cosmetic result. Persistent pain and redness may be an indication of a wound infection. If you suspect you have an infection, contact your GP's surgery or call NHS 111 for further advice.

Medications

Warfarin and aspirin may increase the risk of bleeding during and after the operation. Do not stop or reduce this medication unless advised to do so by a member of the dermatology team. If you are taking warfarin, please ensure you have a blood test for your INR 2-3 days before your minor operation and bring your warfarin booklet with you. For all other blood thinning medication, your doctor will advise at the time of your consultation if this needs to be stopped.

Skin reaction

A reaction to the material used in stitches is unusual and can occur many weeks after surgery. Reactions are more likely to happen with long-lasting stitches that are left in the skin to provide increased support. A persistent swelling or growing lump may indicate a reaction.

You may experience numbness, pin and needles or other sensations around or near the wound after surgery. This may last for some months.

Please feel free to discuss any questions you may have with the doctor or nurse.

Contact details

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