

Information for patients attending for

# Dermatology Skin Surgery

## Your appointment Details:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Clinician: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Telephone Number (office hours): \_\_\_\_\_

Out of hours Contact (for emergencies): \_\_\_\_\_

## Introduction

You have been referred for skin surgery, this is to remove a skin lesion (e.g. moles) or to help us make a diagnosis.

## Procedure

The type of procedure you will have depends on the nature of your skin condition, but it will be one of the following:

- **Punch biopsy:** we remove a very small circle of skin and usually use a stitch to close the wound.
- **Shave excision and cautery:** we make a horizontal cut to remove any lesions raised on the surface of the skin and use an instrument (cautery) to stop any bleeding.
- **Curettage and cautery:** we use a scoop shaped instrument called a curette to scrape away the skin lesion. An instrument (cautery) is then used to stop any bleeding by sealing the skin using heat.
- **Excision biopsy:** we remove the whole lesion including the surrounding area of normal skin. We use stitches to close the wound.

## What do I need to do before my procedure?

Please tell us before the day of your procedure if you:

- Have ever had a severe reaction to a local anaesthetic
- Are taking any blood-thinning medicines such as aspirin, warfarin or apixiban. In most cases you will continue to take prescribed blood thinning medication as normal. If you are on Warfarin, we may ask you to have your international normalised ratio (INR) checked one or two days before the procedure
- Have any bleeding disorders such as haemophilia

- Have an implantable electronic device, such as a pacemaker or defibrillator
- Are Pregnant

## **On the day of the procedure**

You can eat and drink (non-alcoholic) fluids as normal.

Please take any other regular medicines as normal.

If you are having a procedure on your scalp, please make sure that your hair is free from any hair products such as hair spray, mousse or gel. This is because we may use an instrument (cautery) to stop any bleeding, and these products can sometimes be flammable (catch fire).

If you are having a procedure on your finger or toenails, please remove any nail varnish (including clear nail varnish).

If the procedure is elsewhere on your body, we advise you to wear loose or comfortable clothing so that your clothes do not rub the wound afterwards.

We will ask you to keep your wound dry for at least 48 hours after the procedure so please have a shower or bath before your procedure. You will usually be able to bathe or shower after 48 hours but we advise you only to soak the affected area under water for a short time.

You may wish to bring someone with you, but they will normally not be able to come into the surgical operating room with you.

Usually, the procedure will not directly affect you driving unless we need to apply a dressing near your eye, or the lesion was on your hand, foot or lower leg.

## **What will happen when I arrive at hospital?**

Please arrive on time for your appointment. We cannot guarantee that the procedure will go ahead if you are late. The doctor or nurse will try and see you on time, but this is not always possible.

The doctor or nurse will explain what they are going to do and discuss any potential problems that you may experience afterwards. We will ask you to confirm or sign a consent form to say that you understand the information provided and that you agree to go ahead with the procedure.

You will have the opportunity to ask questions.

The staff will ask you to confirm your name and date of birth, and they will check with you the procedure you are attending for and where the lesion is. If it is in a difficult area, we have mirrors available to make sure you can see the lesion.

If the lesion is on your face, we may ask you to remove any make up.

## **What does the surgery involve?**

You will have your procedure in the surgical room in the outpatient clinic. The operator and an assistant will be present, there may also be a doctor or nurse in training in the room. The whole process can take from 15 minutes to 1 hour depending on your procedure.

We will give you a local anaesthetic injection to numb the skin. The local anaesthetic may sting but this passes quickly, it does not make you drowsy. The local anaesthetic will wear off after 2-3 hours. You may need to take paracetamol to help with any pain after this, please do not exceed the recommended dose.

**Do not take non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as aspirin or ibuprofen as these can increase bleeding.**

You may feel pressure and movement whilst the procedure is being carried out, this is completely normal. We will remove the lesion and then close or seal the wound.

## Will I need stitches?

After a punch biopsy or excision biopsy, we usually close the wound with non-dissolving stitches. These need to be removed at your GP surgery after one to two weeks. Please make sure that you can attend the GP surgery. If you can't, for example, because of a holiday, please tell the doctor doing your procedure beforehand.

Sometimes you will also have dissolving stitches, these are absorbed and do not need to be removed.

It is important to protect the wound to help healing and reduce scarring. Until the stitches have been removed, please avoid sports or exercise, or other physical activities that strain the area and putting the wound under water for a long time.

## What are the risks involved in having skin surgery?

**Bruising:** bruising may occur, especially if the procedure is near the eyes. This will disappear after 7 to 14 days and will not leave any permanent mark.

**Infection:** if the wound becomes very red, painful, hot, swollen, or oozes it may be infected. You should see your GP who may prescribe antibiotics.

**Scarring:** there will be a permanent scar after skin surgery. Unfortunately, this cannot be avoided. For excision biopsies, the length of the scar is approximately three times the length of the lesion being removed. In some areas such as the back, chest and upper arms thickened, unsightly scars are more likely to occur.

**Wound breakdown:** wounds can open up after surgical procedures or the stitches break or loosen. If this happens, contact the department you attended for the procedure or your GP.

Minor skin nerves are sometimes damaged during surgery leading to numbness or loss of sensation, this usually improves over time.

## **After care**

We will give you an information leaflet before you leave the department on the day of your procedure, letting you know what to expect and how to care for your wound.

## **Results**

We send the removed tissue to the pathology department for further examination. It may take up to 12 weeks for the results to be available. We will usually give you your results by letter or at another clinic appointment. We will also let your GP know.



