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Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon Provider No.0293559B

Postoperative Instruction Sheet

Lower Limb Grafts

Following your operation, you should expect:

1. **You MUST keep the grafted area elevated as MUCH as possible—this is essential for a good graft take. In general, only put the leg down to go to the toilet.**
2. **APPLY PRESSURE WITH A COOL PACK** (for 15 to 20 minutes each hour) and
3. **KEEP THE AREA ELEVATED** (sit up or lie down with your leg elevated)
4. Some *pain* and *discomfort* is expected. Take **Paracetamol** as required. Applying a COOL PACK and PRESSURE helps treat the discomfort.
5. You should keep your wounds clean and dry. **Keeping your wounds clean and dry will help prevent infection.**
6. The dressings to both the graft site and donor site are to be left intact till review
7. Some swelling of the leg is expected – keep elevated to help with this

Following removal of your sutures or staples from the graft, the graft/s will be redressed. The grafts will continue to be redressed by community nurse/local doctor or relative a few times per week until healed. The time frame for a lower leg graft to heal is variable but usually take approx. 6 weeks give or take. Compression is important to continue until the graft is healed.

The donor site dressing is removed at two weeks. This should be healed. It then requires a moisturizer to be applied for the next 2-3 months until it is settled. If the donor site is unhealed, it will need a further dressing.

Once the graft is healed it will require regular moisturizing. Initially the graft will be quite red, but it will gradually lose the colour over a number of months. Generally, it ends up being a yellow white colour.

Any hollowness will usually flatten out gradually (hollowness may never go completely)

MASSAGE

Massaging your scar is important to achieve the optimal result. It will also give you the best possible scar in the shortest time. You will find that the wound scar will thicken over the first 4 to 6 weeks postoperatively. Massaging will help settle this. The scar is often also red. This is normal. It simply reflects an increased blood supply to the scar during the maturation phase

You can massage the donor scar with vit E or bio oil. For best scar results we advise massage for 12 weeks. Starting 1-2 week after your surgery. **Massage to the graft can only start once completely healed.** You should massage the scar for at least 5 minutes twice a day. In the **first week** of massaging, you should massage in a soft circular motion. In the **second and subsequent weeks** you should massage firmly, applying pressure to the graft and scar. Where possible start applying pressure between the two fingers, such as the rim of the nose, the ear, or the lip.

The aim of firm pressure is to remove the oedema and swelling from the flap and scar. This will help improve the contour of the operated area. It is normal to expect the wound to be tender. Massaging will help the tenderness and sensitivity to settle. Stop massaging the scar when the scar and graft starts to soften and become more supple

Your graft will need a number of months for it to settle. Generally, you will find that the graft will continue to improve over the next 6 to 12 months. **AVOID SUN EXPOSURE** over the first 6 weeks as this can cause unusual pigmentation of the graft.

Some people find that the graft may become raised. This is due to scar contracture under the graft. This should improve with firm pressure and massage. The graft will normally be numb for a number of months.

IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS OR ARE WORRIED ABOUT WOUND INFECTION THEN PLEASE PHONE DR BAYLEY'S ROOMS (07) 3397 9999 OR AFTER HOURS 0402078245

STAPLES AND WOUND CARE

Dr Bayley will usually secure the graft with staples and the leg will be bandaged from toe to knee, **all dressings are to be kept dry and intact until review** with our nurse. If you have a PICO dressing your first review will be day 5 post surgery for a PICO change and then at day 7 for removal of staples. If there is no PICO dressing your review will be 1-week post-surgery. Dr Bayley will advise you when you are to review in the rooms. Please call our rooms to make this appointment.

Keeping your wounds dry and clean will help prevent infection. Avoid itching or rubbing the graft, as this can damage the graft.

The ongoing management of your wounds will be discussed with our nurse at your post op review.

If your wound shows any sign of becoming infected then you should contact Dr Bayley's rooms **(07) 3397 9999** or if after hours contact your local Dr.

REMEMBER:

- Rest** (very Important)
- Ice** (cool do not freeze)
- Compression**
- Elevation** (Keep your leg above the level of your heart)

In the long term the graft will be an area that:

- Tends to be dry and need regular use of a moisturizer
- Does not grow hair
- Does not sweat
- Remains a pale colour or occasionally becomes quite variegated due to sun exposure
- Tans poorly