



Dr Kate M Kelly

Skin Cancer & Reconstructive Surgery

Skin Graft: Wound Care Instructions

Your doctor has chosen to repair your wound with a skin graft. This involves patching your wound with healthy skin taken from elsewhere on your body. This patch of skin is very delicate and sensitive to harm during the first few weeks of healing. A dressing called a “bolster” is tied over the skin graft to keep it protected during the first part of the healing process. The bolster dressing stays in place for 7 days, then will be removed at your follow-up appointment. ***Please note the bolster dressing is stitched in place to secure it to the surrounding skin - be careful not to accidentally pull it off!***

Care instructions:

- **Washing:** You may wash as normal starting tomorrow. It is good to clean around the bolster dressing daily. Be gentle: do not scrub the wound site, and gently pat dry.
- **Ointment:** Use a Q-tip to apply **Vaseline** (NOT POLYSPORIN) directly onto and around the bolster dressing and sutures 1-2 times per day, or more often if it seems to be drying out. ***We do not recommend Polysporin*** as studies have shown that it leads to worse healing.
- **Stitches:** The bolster dressing is secured with blue stitches. These will be removed along with the bolster dressing at your follow-up appointment. The graft underneath is secured with clear dissolving stitches. These will fall out on their own after a few weeks.
- **Pain:** You should not experience much pain following your surgery. For mild pain, Tylenol and/or Advil may be used.
- **Bleeding:** You may experience a small amount of bleeding from the wound site during the first 48h. If so, apply firm pressure with some gauze directly to the site for 20 minutes ***without stopping***. This will resolve most bleeding problems.
- **Signs of infection:** A small amount of redness is a normal part of healing. However, if your wound becomes very red/purple, hot or swollen, it may be infected. Contact your doctor if your wound develops these features.

Call your doctor if:

- *You experience severe pain that is not controlled with Tylenol and/or Advil*
- *Your pain **worsens** after 48h*
- *You experience bleeding that will not stop after 20 minutes of constant pressure*
- *The wound becomes very red, hot, painful or swollen*

Follow-up:

- **Stitches:** will be removed _____ Office / GP
- **Follow-up with Dr. Kelly:** _____ Office / Phone