

WOUND CARE INSTRUCTIONS FOR SKIN GRAFTS

A **skin graft** is healthy skin that is used to replace damaged or missing skin. The graft is taken from another part of your body. You will need to take care of the graft and donor sites as instructed so they heal properly. It will take two weeks or longer for the graft to completely attach to the underlying tissue. The graft site may take several months to completely heal.

A **bolster** holds the skin graft in place to prevent movement of the graft on the underlying tissue, thereby allowing the blood supply into the graft. The bolster also prevents fluid from accumulating under the graft such as blood, which could cause the skin graft not to stick or develop circulation.

- The bandage that was put on in the office must stay on for 48 hours.
- The bolster (yellow bandage sewn in place) must stay on and **dry** until you return for your next appointment.
- After 48 hours, you will begin care of the graft site.

REMEMBER TO WASH YOUR HANDS BEFORE CLEANSING YOUR WOUND

Care of graft site:

- Gently remove the bandage that was put on in the office.
- Gently use a clean Q tip to remove any dried blood or ointment from around the bolster. **DO NOT GO UNDER THE BOLSTER.**
- Take a clean Q tip and apply Vaseline (from a new jar) around the bolster.
- Cover the bolster with a small bandage. It is important to keep the bolster covered at all times.

It is important to refrain from strenuous activity (walking only, no lifting, pulling, tugging, or jerking).

If your graft is on your face, sleep with your head elevated (equivalent of 2-3 pillows). Try to avoid sleeping on the side that the graft is on. If located on an extremity, keep elevated whenever possible; higher or equal to heart level.

When to call us:

Fever: 100.4 or higher

Pain: Pain that gets worse or does not go away. You may apply an ice pack to the affected area for 10-15 minutes every hour.

Bleeding: Bleeding that cannot be stopped by applying pressure.

Signs of Infection: Including increase in swelling or redness of the graft, white, or bad smelling discharge from the graft, red streaks from the graft site, or pus at the wound.

VINEGAR SOAKS

After you have removed your bandage, you may begin to use vinegar soaks. Vinegar soaks gently clean the wound, decrease inflammation, and inhibit bacterial growth.

Preparing the Vinegar Solution:

- You will need one clean container with a lid
- 1 tablespoon white vinegar
- 2 cups of bottled water

Combine water and vinegar in the sealed container. **Replace this solution every 2 or 3 days.** This needs to be refrigerated.

- **Before you begin**, thoroughly wash hands with soap and water for at least 30 seconds.
- Then, wash the wound with antibacterial soap and water. Pat the area dry with a clean towel.
- Use a **clean** gauze pad or Q-tip applicator. Pour solution over the Q-tip or gauze pad then gently dab along the suture line.
- After the wound is completely dry, use a new Q-tip applicator to gently apply Vaseline to the suture line.
- Repeat this procedure 2 times daily for the entire duration instructed.

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