

Skin surgery

Information for patients

This leaflet is being given to you as your clinician (doctor or specialist nurse) has recommended that you have skin surgery. The leaflet aims to answer questions and give instructions about your procedure. If after reading this leaflet you have any further questions or concerns, please contact the dermatology team or speak to your surgeon on the day of your surgery.

We aim to give you the best service possible and do appreciate any feedback.

Please read all of this leaflet carefully

What should I do before I come in to hospital for my procedure?

- Please **eat breakfast or lunch before coming in to hospital**.
- **Shower or bathe** - you may not be able to for a few days after your surgery.
- **Wear comfortable clothes** that allow us to easily get to the area being operated on.
- If the lesion is on your face, **do not wear make-up**.
- **We recommend that you do not drive after your procedure. Please arrange for someone to take you home after your procedure**, unless you have been told otherwise.
- **Holidays/Special events**. You may have a wound dressing that needs to be removed at a follow-up appointment, which may be difficult if you are going away within one to two weeks of your surgery. Please let us know if you have any events coming up.
- Please consider taking **time off work if you do a physical job**.
- **Smoking**: we recommend that you avoid smoking for at least two weeks before and after your surgery as this can affect your ability to heal well. For free and friendly support to quit smoking, call One You Kent Smokefree on 0300 12 31 22 0 or for more information visit www.oneyoukent.org.uk



- **Allergies:** please let your doctor know if you have any allergies to medicines or latex. It is unlikely to affect your surgery unless you have had a bad reaction to local anaesthetic. Please bring documentation of this to your appointment.
- **Please let us know before the day of your surgery if you have a pacemaker or defibrillator.** These may affect what equipment we can use, but should not prevent your surgery.

Drugs and medication

- Certain drugs or medications may affect your surgery. **Please make sure you bring to hospital a list of the drugs that you are prescribed by your doctor.** Include any over the counter medications such as vitamins that you may buy yourself.
- **Warfarin.** Even if your INR is stable you need to have an extra test in the week before your operation. If your INR level is over three, please contact the department on 01227 86 43 65 or 01227 78 30 20. Please bring your yellow warfarin book to your appointment.
- Any **medications for blood thinning or anti-clotting agents**, for example Rivaroxaban, Aspirin, or Clopidogrel: these do not always need to be stopped but it is useful to let the doctor know if you are on it.
- Some **over the counter medications** may increase your risk of bleeding and should be avoided for at least a week before and after your operation. This includes vitamins (such as vitamin E) and herbal supplements (such as ginkgo or garlic).

What should I do when I arrive at the hospital?

Please check your appointment letter carefully, so you know where to go when you arrive at the hospital.

Patients living with dementia: if the person needing the operation does not have capacity to consent to their procedure it is essential that they come to hospital with someone who knows them well and, if it exists, has power of attorney for medical decisions (you will need to bring the evidence for this to the hospital).

How long will I be in hospital for?

Please allow one to two hours for your hospital appointment.

How do I get to the hospital?

All hospital sites have patient car parking (charges apply) and all have main bus routes serving them.

Non-emergency patient transport is provided by G4S. This is for patients whose health means they cannot get to or from hospital in any other way. You can find out if you are eligible for patient transport by calling 0800 09 60 21 1.

For up-to-date information on how to get to hospital, please look at the Trust's Travel Information web page www.ekhufft.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/find-us/

What procedures are carried out in the Skin Surgery Clinic?

Excision is the complete removal of the skin lesion, which is sent to Pathology. After the lesion is removed, your skin will usually be repaired with stitches, to leave as neat a scar as possible. You may need a local skin flap or skin graft repair to close your wound. If this is necessary, your doctor will discuss this with you.

Biopsy is where we take a small skin sample for testing, to make sure we give you a correct diagnosis. Your wound will be very small, usually less than 1cm and closed with stitches or left to heal by itself (like a graze).

Curettage and cautery is where the skin lesion is removed by scooping out or scraping off the skin and then using an instrument to seal the surface by burning.

Will I have an anaesthetic?

Yes. You will have local anaesthetic injected around the area to be treated; this will sting temporarily, but the operation should then be pain free. You will be awake the whole time. Please let the doctor or nurse know if you feel any discomfort during your procedure, as extra anaesthetic can be given if necessary.

Who will perform my surgery?

Most surgery is performed by a doctor, with a nurse in attendance. We also have specialist trained nurses who perform small excisions or biopsies.

What complications can occur after surgery?

- **Inflammation** is normal and presents as a slight redness around the stitches. It usually settles down when your stitches are removed.
- **Infection.** You may experience pain, swelling, and redness, or occasionally some pus coming from your wound. If this happens you should contact NHS 111 and they will decide if you need to be prescribed antibiotics. You may also contact the nurses on the Dermatology Unit during working hours.
- **Bleeding.** If this happens, elevate (raise) the affected area and apply continuous pressure for 20 minutes. If the bleeding continues after 20 minutes of constant pressure contact the Dermatology Department or NHS 111.
- Most procedures will have some **bruising**, in particular around the eyes.
- You may feel some **pain and discomfort** after your procedure. If this happens you should take paracetamol.
- **Scarring.** There is no such thing as scarless surgery. Usually the length of the scar will be three to four times the width of the removed lesion.
- **A wide stretched scar** can occur, especially overlying large muscle groups and near joints or if activities that stretch the scar are resumed too early.

- **Hypertrophic or Keloid Scars:** this is an over-reaction of the fibrous tissue/scar in your skin. It does not happen immediately but develops after a few weeks or months. Keloid scars are more common on the front of the chest, arms, and back, and in scars which have not been sufficiently immobilised. They are more common in Afro-Caribbean skin types. If you have had any previous problem with thickened scars, please let us know.
- **Bursting of the wound** (dehiscence) is very uncommon. The most likely time for this to happen is just after your stitches have been removed or if your wound has become infected. Taking extra care for a week or so after your stitches have been removed, will reduce the risk of this happening.
- **Nerve damage.** Sometimes, small nerves in the skin will be removed with the lesion. This may result in numbness around your wound, which may be permanent. Damage to nerves that supply muscles is very rare, though can happen in certain areas on your face. Your doctor will discuss these risks with you before your procedure.
- **Pigmented scars.** To reduce this risk, you should put sun protection on your scar for the first year following your surgery. We recommend you use a high factor sunscreen (at least SPF30). This should lead to a pale scar, which should be less noticeable.

Will I have stitches?

Most excisions will need stitches to close the wound. These are often dissolvable, but occasionally you may need to have them removed. However, we do sometimes leave the wound to heal by itself. The doctor will discuss with you how to achieve the best outcome.

You will have a dressing placed over your wound. Before you leave hospital, you will be given written advice on how to care for your wound at home.

When can I resume my normal activities?

You should not swim, play sports, or exercise while your stitches are in place. Depending on the size and site of your surgery you may be asked to not take part in activities that might stretch that area for a longer period of time (for example three to four weeks) after your stitches have been removed. Please ask if you are not sure.

When will I get my results?

We will write to you with the results of your surgery/biopsy as soon as possible. If you have not heard from us after six weeks, please call the Dermatology Department on 01227 86 43 65 or 01227 78 30 20.

Contact details

If you do have any questions or concerns, including if your lesion seems to be growing whilst you are on the waiting list, please contact the Dermatology Department on 01227 86 43 65 or 01227 78 30 20.

If you would like to discuss the time or date of your appointment or you wish to cancel it, please phone 01227 78 30 20.

This leaflet has been produced with and for patients

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff. You can ask someone to contact us on your behalf.

Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 78 31 45, or email ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net

Patients should not bring in large sums of money or valuables into hospital. Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property had been handed in to Trust staff for safe-keeping.

Further patient leaflets are available via the East Kent Hospitals web site www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/patientinformation