

SKIN GRAFT

RECOVERY AND CARE FIRST WEEK

Your skin graft is extremely fragile. It is important that the graft is not disturbed for three weeks. Do not rub, bump, or touch, including blowing your nose forcibly. During this time the graft is developing its own blood supply. The new blood vessels are tiny and very fragile. If the graft is injured from friction, strenuous exercise or activity, or from changes in the bloodstream caused by smoking, the skin graft may not survive.

Do not use an ice pack on the skin graft since it is very fragile. You may use one on the donor site. Do not shower the first week so that the bandage remains dry. You may take a bath as long as the skin graft stays dry.

The bandage placed on the skin graft at the time of surgery should be kept dry and intact for one week. Do not change the bandage. At one week, return to the office for a dressing change and post-op check of the skin graft.

RECOVERY AND CARE AFTER WEEK ONE

After your one-week post-op check and dressing change of the skin graft, begin changing the dressing once per day.

1. First, wash your hands with soap and water.
2. Remove the bandage and gently clean the graft with gauze or Q-tips that have been moistened with soap and water. Use gentle blotting motions and avoid rubbing or friction on the graft.
3. Do not use hydrogen peroxide on the graft for the first two weeks. Blot the wound dry with clean gauze or Q-tips.
4. Once clean, apply a generous amount of petroleum jelly (Vaseline®) or Aquaphor® healing ointment to a Band-aid or non-stick dressing then place it gently on the graft.
5. Add a square of gauze if there is drainage or oozing.
6. Gently secure the dressing with tape.
7. Do not let the wound dry out and "scab over." It must stay moist with ointment and a dressing.
8. Do not allow adhesive from the tape to come into contact with the graft. This may pull the graft off.

It is not unusual to be able to see crusting underneath your bandage. Do not be alarmed if the graft becomes dark, crusty, purplish, or pink in color.

You may start to use hydrogen peroxide to help clean the graft after the graft has been on for at least two weeks. Use hydrogen peroxide ONLY if there is crust that is sticking or difficult to remove with soap and water. Otherwise, continue to just use soap and water.

You will continue wound care once daily keeping the skin graft covered until the wound is completely healed over. This can sometimes take up to 4-5 weeks.

During this time, you may shower normally as long as the skin graft site is kept dry, covered and away from direct water pressure.

