



DR. JAMES LOWE'S SKIN GRAFT INSTRUCTIONS

Days 1-5 Skin grafts require approximately 5 days to achieve take. During this time it is important to keep the local dressing clean and avoid trauma or sheering of the wound. If a foul odor is noted from the wound the surgeons should be notified immediately.

The skin graft donor site is usually on your leg or thigh. The site will have a clear "Tegaderm" dressing over it for several days. Drainage or leakage of the fluid from this area is normal after surgery. It is important to keep the donor site moist for several days to increase healing. The donor site is always the most painful area following surgery.

Once the drainage is noted the clear dressing will to be changed to a yellow colored gauze. This gauze is allowed to dry on the donor site and is left open to air to become like a second skin. If the gauze does not dry to the donor site it should be replaced or removed completely. A scab should form over the donor site and will simply fall off with time.

With permission, you may shower the second post-operative day, let the water gently hit the donor area, and blot dry. The skin graft site should be kept covered and dry if at all possible. Elevate the operated area above the heart for at least one week and wear splints or immobilizers as instructed by the surgeon.

The swelling and discoloration peaks at the third day and then decreases over the next five days. Most of the skin graft will have taken by five days, but no skin grafts are ever 100% successful. If the graft fails another attempt can be made after the wound is clean enough.

Days 5-20 The skin graft has not completely healed at this point. It is important to gently wash the skin graft site with soap and water every day. Do not allow the skin graft to dry out during the day. Apply Bacitracin ointment or Vaseline to the graft twice a day to keep moist. Usually sutures are absorbable and do not require removal, but staples may need to be removed at 2 weeks.

Weeks 3-4 The dressing or scab on the donor site usually will have fallen off at this time. If the skin graft site has not completely healed continue wound care as described above. Once the site has healed and no open areas are noted it is okay to bath. The skin graft should not be allowed to dry out too much at this time. Most of the swelling and discoloration should be gone.

Months 2-4 Apply Nivea moisturizer (or another over-the-counter lotion or cream) to wound site and massage the area two or three times a day. Anti-scar products like Mederma or ScarGuard can be used to decrease long term scarring on donor site and wound. The wounds will become bright red at about 2 months and begin to fade or lighten as they mature. Avoid direct sun exposure to the surgical and donor sites.

Month 6 The scar will be re-evaluated at this time. Usually, scar revision can not be done until 10 to twelve months after surgery, if needed.

STRENUOUS ACTIVITY AND HEAVY LIFTING IS TO BE AVOIDED FOR AT LEAST 4-6 WEEKS. DIRECT SUN CONTACT ON THE SURGICAL SITE IS TO BE AVOIDED FOR 6-12 MONTHS. PLEASE USE A SUN SCREEN – SPF 15 OR GREATER WHEN IN THE SUN.

***Call the office you have any questions or if any problem should arise, or if you are having any signs or symptoms of infection (redness, fever, or drainage). (405) 749-4227 JBL**