

Consent information sheet for patients having removal of a skin lesion, skin lump or having scar surgery



General information

Your surgeon will have indicated that you would benefit from a surgical procedure. There may be several reasons for this and it is important that you are completely clear about the benefits and disadvantages of the treatment recommended.

Sometimes, alternative treatments are possible and these will have been discussed already with you. Alternative treatments may include creams, injections or LASER. The options depend on exactly what is being treated and there will be advantages or disadvantages to each of these.

The surgery that is proposed is usually conducted in an operating theatre and may be under a local anaesthetic, a local anaesthetic block, or a general anaesthetic. It is important that you understand what these mean and discuss with your surgeon the most appropriate form of anaesthetic to be used in your procedure.

It is important that you are aware of the risks of any surgical procedure before you agree to it. The risks are summarised below, but there may be risks or complications specific to you that your surgeon will make you aware of.

In addition, some people may have particular risks or specific concerns about potential risks because of their job or personal circumstances. For example, someone who plays the piano and is having finger surgery may have particular concerns about being able to play the piano after their surgery. You should discuss any special concerns with your surgeon so that they are fully aware of any issues you may have in relation to your activities, your job or your particular circumstances.

Risks of surgery

Bleeding

Any surgical procedure involves cutting through the skin and sometimes there may be prolonged bleeding during, or after, the procedure. It is usually controlled during the procedure, or with dressings after the procedure. However, bleeding may continue or blood may collect under the skin forming a haematoma. If the bleeding continues or if there is significant swelling associated with bleeding, you should seek medical advice as soon as possible, to ensure that all is well. Certain medications may increase the risk of bleeding. Please make sure your surgeon is aware of all the medications that you take.

Infection

Any surgical wound can potentially become infected. Signs of this are increasing pain, redness and sometimes increasing ooze or even pus. Occasionally, you may notice an abnormal smell. Any of these signs need to be discussed with a medical professional to see if there is any concern regarding infection. Most infections can be treated easily with antibiotics or by releasing stitches and dressings. You may need to be admitted for intravenous antibiotics, if the doctor feels it is necessary. Infections can sometimes delay wound healing or cause more scarring. Sometimes, you may need a further surgical procedure to deal with an infection.

Scarring

Any surgical procedure on the skin will result in a scar. Most scars tend to heal well and go through a maturing process that takes between twelve and eighteen months. In some people, scars can become abnormal. This may be because they have a tendency to develop abnormal scars, or because the wound has taken a long time to heal, or it may be in a particular part of the body which is more

prone to abnormal scarring. Sometimes, these abnormal scars can cause itching, pain, discomfort or restriction of movement. It may take a long time for these scars to settle down and, occasionally, further treatments may be required to deal with them. It is not unusual to find that the appearance of the scar is different in different parts of the same scar.

Damage to deeper structures

Many surgical procedures involve the deeper tissues. This will depend on the particular type of surgery proposed. It is important for you to understand that you may suffer damage to the structures underneath the skin. This may include damage to blood vessels, nerves, tendons or muscles and can potentially impact on the final result. It may cause problems such as muscle weakness, numbness, sensitivity, painful lumps or drooping of part of the body (because of weaker muscles or additional surgery). Sometimes these effects are permanent and some require further treatment to deal with them.

Bruising and swelling

Any surgical procedure will result in some bruising and swelling. The amount of bruising and swelling often depends on the extent of surgery, but also on the individual and the part of the body operated on. Although most bruising settles down after two to three weeks, sometimes it can take much longer and on occasion can cause permanent discolouration of the skin.

Swelling also generally resolves within two to three weeks, but in certain situations may take much longer. This is especially the case if your procedure involves a flap. The flap may be more swollen than the surrounding tissue.

Pain

Any surgery may result in pain after the procedure. Pain is usually easily controlled with simple painkillers but can sometimes last quite a long time. Rarely, long-term pain can cause significant problems. This may sometimes be related to nerves being trapped within the scar tissue underneath the skin.

Skin sensitivity

After any surgery skin can become quite numb, but sometimes after a few weeks it can become excessively sensitive to touch or cold or heat. This sensitivity usually resolves but sometimes may require specific management.

Sutures/stitches

Most surgical procedures involve stitching. The stitches may be all underneath the skin or some may remain on the surface. Sometimes, surface stitches may leave small stitch marks and sometimes, the deeper stitches may cause inflammation and break through the wound.

Healing problems

In some cases, wounds do not heal well. They may either open up or take a long time to heal completely. This may be because of infection or bleeding underneath the tissue, or it may be because of medical problems or medication that you are taking. As a result, the wound may need to be dressed for much longer than expected or even require further surgery. Sometimes, the prolonged healing time may result in more scarring.

Skin contour

Whenever tissue is removed there may be a change in the contour of the skin. This may result in tightness or a dip, and sometimes the ends of the wound may poke up slightly, forming “dog ears”. Usually, these improve over time and the shape/contour change gets less visible over a period of weeks and months. Sometimes, further surgery may be required to improve the situation.

Allergic reactions

Some patients develop reactions to the dressings used to cover the wound, or may develop an allergy or have a reaction to the medication used. Often, these resolve without any treatment but, occasionally, if the reaction is severe, they may need to take an anti-allergy medication. In very rare cases, people have severe allergic reactions which may require urgent medication and admission to hospital.

Anaesthetics

Surgery can be performed under local anaesthetic, general anaesthetic or by using local anaesthetic blocks. These make an arm or leg, or other part of the body, numb. Each of these methods of anaesthesia has potential complications which include reactions to the medication, injury to the nerves being anaesthetised or, in the case of general anaesthesia other specific complications. If you are due to have a general anaesthetic, all potential complications should be discussed with the anaesthetist. Very rarely, local anaesthetic medication can affect the heart or brain. Your medical/nursing team will be keeping an eye on you during the local anaesthetic injection, to make sure all is well.

Final appearance

Occasionally, the final appearance after the surgery is not quite as you would expect or want. You may have problems with movement or appearance. If this is the case, it is important that you discuss this with your doctor. Sometimes, you may need to choose between having the surgery or maintaining your appearance or mobility. You should discuss this with the surgeon before you undergo the procedure.

Further surgery

Sometimes, when a lump or skin lesion is removed and sent off for analysis the result comes back suggesting that further surgery may be required. There may be several reasons for this, and it is important to be aware that this is a possibility and to know that should this be required your doctor will discuss the reasons for this.

Medication

Certain medications can have an impact on surgery and complications. This is why it is important to make sure that you have informed your doctor of all medication that you are on, and the reasons for taking it. This is particularly important for medication that thins the blood (e.g. Warfarin or Rivaroxaban, Apixaban or Clopidogrel or Aspirin), or that affects the immune system . Some herbal medicines may also affect bleeding or healing, so you should mention these to your doctor as well.

Post-operative care

We will give you instructions on what you can and can't do following your surgery and it is important that you follow these. If you have any queries or concerns ask the medical team. If you don't follow the instructions given you may increase your risk of complications.

**For any queries please contact switch board on 01342 414000
and ask for the trauma coordinators**

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