



Queen Victoria Hospital
NHS Foundation Trust

Plastic Surgery Outreach Service

Patient Information Leaflet



About the Plastic surgery outreach service

The Plastic Surgery Outreach service is based at Queen Victoria Hospital NHS Foundation Trust in East Grinstead, West Sussex. The aim of the service is to ensure that specialist plastic surgery care is made available to people who find it hard to access services on-site at the QVH. Patients, who may possibly need plastic surgery such as skin grafting, but who are unable to attend an outpatient appointment or are above 70yrs of age, can be referred to the outreach service by hospital doctors, the hospital medical team/paramedics who attended at home and GP/community nurses.

The service is run by a specialist team, who within two weeks of referral will make an initial assessment using a combination of photographs and consultation with you, your family and your clinical team, either in hospital or at home.

They will discuss with you all aspects of care and a treatment plan will be made. This may include skin graft surgery or specialist dressings.

The plan may change over time but at all stages you will be involved in any decisions that are made regarding treatment and the outreach nurses will ensure that you are fully informed of all treatment options.

If you have been admitted to your local hospital

Although you have sustained a traumatic wound, there may be other medical or surgical problems that need to be diagnosed, treated or stabilised, and require a stay in your local hospital.

Once you have been referred to the outreach plastic surgery service, the outreach nurse will assess your photographs and if a skin graft is clinically indicated, arrange to visit you in hospital and together with the hospital Tissue Viability Nurse (TVN), nursing and medical staff, provide advice about the most appropriate treatment plan and dressings for you.

If the outreach nurse visits you at home

Your community nurse, practice nurse or your GP may have referred you to the plastic surgery outreach service. The Outreach nurses will assess your

photographs and if a skin graft or specialist dressings are clinically indicated, the outreach nurse will contact you to arrange a visit at home and carry out an assessment of your injury. After discussing the different options with you (conservative or surgical management), the outreach nurse will liaise with the community nurses, your GP or practice nurses, and put in place a plan of care. If you decide on surgical management, the outreach nurse will go through the necessary paperwork with you.

Once any other medical problems are resolved or stabilised, we will agree with you an operation date at Queen Victoria Hospital.

Your surgery may be performed as a day case or may involve an overnight stay. After the operation you may be transferred back to the referring hospital or sent home to recover. After 5-7 days the plastic surgery outreach nurse will visit you again, wherever you may be, and check how both the graft and donor site are progressing. In some instances, it may be required to keep you at Queen Victoria Hospital for more than two nights. This is not standard practice and the surgical team will discuss this with you during your admission.

If your wounds are progressing well, the outreach nurse will refer you to the community nurses for ongoing care and dressing management. You will be discharged from the care of the outreach team at this stage but further support will be available over the phone or via e-mail if you need it.

Looking after your injury

Pain

You may have been prescribed painkillers. If your pain is not controlled, please inform the community or hospital nurses and the painkillers can be increased or changed.

Pain is often worse on movement or when you are having a dressing change. If this is the case please tell the nurse or doctor. Some pain is to be expected but it must be at tolerable levels. If the pain is preventing you moving or sleeping then your painkillers are not adequate.

Pain can also be caused by the dressing, so please inform the nurses if the dressing feels uncomfortable.

Dressings

Keep dressings clean and dry. Showering and bathing can be organised but a new dressing will have to be applied if your dressing gets wet. Please discuss showering and visits to change dressings with the outreach and local nurses. If your dressing needs adjusting please wash your hands with soap and water both before and after touching your dressings and/or wound. Please tell the nurses if your dressings are uncomfortable or slip off-so that they can deal with the problem. Please do not remove dressings unless a healthcare professional tells you to do so. Once the graft has matured it should be moisturised with an unperfumed cream.

The wounds can produce a high level of discharge and may be a brownish green or straw colour. This is normal in some wounds, such as the donor site. It is not necessarily a sign that there is an infection present. If your dressings are not managing to contain the level of fluid please tell the local nurses or outreach nurse. The dressings can be changed or replaced more frequently.

Indications that the wound may have become infected:

- If you feel unwell, feverish or have a temperature
- Offensive smell
- If you are experiencing a persistent increase in pain or notice redness and inflamed skin appearing around your dressing

If you are attending your GP surgery for dressing changes, please ring your local community nurses, your practice nurse or your GP so that they can assess the wound to see if they need to prescribe antibiotics.

Donor site care

The donor area has a dressing, directly in contact with the skin, which should be left intact. There is a further layer of gauze and a dressing on top which can be removed 2-3 days after your discharge from Queen Victoria Hospital. After removing the gauze layer, the bottom layer should be washed over once daily with soap and water, the excess moisture removed by patting with a clean towel and then left to dry in the air. As the edges lift off please trim them back to prevent them catching on clothes. Once the area has healed the dressing should fall off and the area can then be moisturized with an unperfumed cream. If there is a high level of exudate

or a suspected infection please increase the washing to twice or three times daily and contact the outreach coordinator. We will arrange a further visit if we feel it is required. In some cases the dressing may come away too soon, and your healthcare team will need to clean the area and cover it using appropriate dressings. You may also find the donor dressing does not come away once the area is healed. In that case you might need to soak the dressing and try lifting it away while it is wet, or arrange for your healthcare team to remove it.

Activities and rest

You should carry on with daily activities but also have periods of rest. If the wound affects your feet or lower legs it is important to elevate these when you are resting. This is because swelling may develop around the wound and prevent a good blood supply reaching it. This will slow down healing. If you notice increasing swelling you may need to increase the time that you rest and elevate the area.

Diet

It is important to maintain a good balanced diet and drink plenty of fluids. This will support the body as it repairs itself.

Effects on your general wellbeing

Injuries can be very traumatic both to the person that they happen to and also to their friends and family, especially if they have witnessed the accident or have discovered the person after the accident. Thinking frequently about the accident and/or resulting injury is a normal reaction to trauma. Flashbacks and nightmares may occur. If you are experiencing any of these, please talk to the outreach nurse. This is perfectly normal for a while but if this reaction persists for weeks you may need some help. Everyone is different and it may be that you experience none of these things.

Contact details for patients

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact us:

Plastics Outreach Service:

Service Co-ordinator 01342 414124 (Monday-Friday 9am - 5pm)

Megan Harwood, Clinical Nurse Specialist 07833 285945

Sophie Kirk, Clinical Nurse Specialist 07827895578

Please leave a message on the answerphone, giving your name and contact details, as the nurse may be driving or attending a patient.

Email address: qvh.plasticsoutreach@nhs.net



If you'd like to find out how you can support QVH,
please visit www.supportqvh.org



Please ask if you
would like this leaflet
in larger print or an
alternative format.

Main Outpatient Department

Issue 4 – Ref: no. 0681

Approved by the Patient Information Group

Print September 2022 – Review September 2025

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