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See also **General Instructions after skin surgery**

## Normal Healing After Skin Surgery

### *Swelling, Bruising, Redness*

**Normal:** Swelling, bruising and redness may continue for days to weeks after the stitches are removed. This is a normal part of healing. The swelling may get worse for 1-3 days, but after that should start to improve.

**Abnormal:** If the wound becomes more red, tender or swollen after one to two days, please notify us or consult with your family physician. Remember, the wound will be red, tender and swollen after surgery, but this should start to improve after 2-3 days, **not get worse!**

### *Colour*

Early on the wound will be pink-red, then may become purplish in colour. The colour of the wound will take several months to return to a more normal appearance. A skin graft usually gets very bruised, and can be purple or black, in the first week but should start to get better after that.

### *Scars*

**Normal:** All breaks in the skin result in scarring. The goal of surgery is to minimize the amount and hide these scars as much as possible. Proper wound care is very important in minimizing scarring. Scars will continue to improve up to 18 months after surgery.

**Abnormal:** If your wound continues to be raised, red, thick or tender after 6 months, contact your doctor regarding methods to reduce this "over-scarring".

### *Wound Protection*

Healed wounds are more sensitive to the sunlight, temperature and injury. It is important to be careful to protect your healing wound from excessive temperatures (cold and heat), direct sunlight, and trauma.

### *Numbness, Itching*

Wounds are often numb and itchy for weeks to months after surgery. This is normal as the nerves are attempting to grow into the healing area.

### *Dissolvable Stitches*

"Buried or dissolvable stitches will be dissolved by the body over a period of weeks to months. It is common for the wound to "spit" parts of the stitch through the wound during this process. Remnants of dissolvable stitches may be trimmed with scissors if they are bothersome.

### *Applying Products to Wounds*

Anything may be applied to the healed wound, usually 4-7 days after the stitches are removed. Sunscreen is encouraged. Make-up is also safe. Avoid using products that irritate the area.

### *Skin Grafts*

Grafts need to grow into your skin so they can look very pink/purple and even black for the first week. If you hold salt water on for 5 minutes a day followed by ointment once to twice a day they should start to look more normal over a few weeks. Keep the area out of the sun for 6 months with strong sunscreen and a cover if possible (hat or bandage if hard to shade).