

Care of split-thickness skin graft donor site

The split thickness skin graft donor site is the area of your body from which your skin graft has been taken. The dressing on the donor site should stay in place for 5-7 days. The bandage and outer pad may be changed before this if there is any discharge.

Remove the bandage and outer pad taking care not to disturb the dressing covering the donor site. Place a clean pad over the dressing and stick that pad in place using sellotape or micropore tape. Using a clean bandage cover the dressing as best as possible. During this time the dressing should not become wet, please take care when washing /bathing.

The donor site can be painful for the first 48 hours, it may feel tight and itchy, and this is normal. You may take your normal pain relief medication if required. After 5-7 days the area will be assessed and it will be decided if another dressing is required.

Once the dressings have been removed permanently a nurse will explain how to care for the donor site. A moisturising cream such as Nivea or E45 should be massaged into the area at least 4 times daily for 5 minutes. Massage can help flatten and fade the scar. Wash the area as normal using soap and water to prevent any build-up of the cream.

There are some anti-scarring creams available that can be applied to the wound/scar and help to reduce visible scarring. These anti-scar creams are silicone based and whilst their action is not fully understood they can, in some individuals, be very effective. Good examples include Kelocoat (Alliance Pharma) and Dermatix (Hanson Medical), although there may be others available on the market. If you require further information, please discuss with the nurse practitioner or your pharmacist.

Please remember to protect the donor site from exposure to the sun. It is advisable to use a high factor sun cream on the site, such as total sun block, as it may be more susceptible to sunburn for the next 2 years as it takes this long for the donor site to fully

heal. It is advisable that you use sun block on the site after this time and whenever exposed to strong sunlight.

If you are worried or wish to ask any questions about this information, please contact the Oculoplastic nurse practitioner via the hospital switchboard on: (0161) 276 1234 and ask the operator to bleep 5235 or 5605 Monday–Friday 9.00 am - 5.00 pm or contact staff on Ward 55 on (0161) 276 5512 (24 hour) every day.

