

## Plastic Surgery – Skin Graft

### Introduction

A skin graft is where healthy skin is removed from an unaffected area of the body and used to cover lost or damaged skin.

They can be used for large wounds, or where an area of the skin is surgically removed – for example, due to [cancer](#) or [burns](#).

There are 2 main types of skin graft.

#### **Partial or split thickness skin graft**

This is where a thin layer of skin (as thin as tissue paper) is shaved from an area that usually heals well, such as the thigh, buttocks or calf.

The donor area may look pink or lighter than your surrounding skin for a few months, depending on your skin tone, then leave a faint (hardly noticeable) scar.

#### **Full thickness skin graft**

This is where the full thickness of skin (the top layer and layers underneath) are removed and the area is stitched closed.

Sites often used include the neck, behind the ear, the upper arm and groin.

Because this type of skin graft is thicker, picking up a new blood supply can be more difficult, so any dressing will be left in place for 5 to 7 days before being removed by the surgical team.

The Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on the NHS ability to provide routine elective services. We recognise that patients are waiting longer than we would all like and it is not always possible to identify when treatment will take place. This document provides you with information on how you are able to support yourself while waiting to attend the hospital. The guidance has been written by clinicians who are responsible for your care.

### Guidance for Patients

Before the procedure, you'll be given a [general anaesthetic](#) or a [local anaesthetic](#), depending on the size and location of the affected area.

The skin graft will usually be held in place using stitches, staples, clips or special glue.

The area will be covered with a sterile dressing until it has connected with the surrounding blood supply, which usually takes around 5 to 7 days.

A dressing will also be placed over the area where the skin has been taken from (the donor site) to help protect it from infection.

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The donor area of partial thickness skin grafts usually takes about 2 weeks to heal.

For full thickness skin grafts, the donor area only takes about 5 to 10 days to heal, because it's usually quite small and closed with stitches.

At first, the colour of the grafted skin may appear red or purple, but it should begin to look more like your surrounding skin over time. It can take a year or two for the appearance of the skin to settle down completely.

The final colour may be slightly different from the surrounding skin, and the area may be slightly indented.

It is important that while you are waiting for your surgery you remain as active and as medically fit as possible. If you have any long-standing conditions such as high blood pressure you should get this reviewed at your GP surgery to make sure it remains well controlled. This will also help prevent any unnecessary delays when you come for your pre-operative assessment. Maintaining a well-balanced diet is also important, as is reducing any excessive weight that may be impacting on your general health. If you are a current smoker it would be advisable to seek support to help with stopping, advice can be found at your local pharmacy or Doctor's surgery.

### Find out your BMI

Follow this link to the [NHS BMI Calculator](#)

### BMI of 25+

If you have a Body Mass Index of 25 or higher the [Better Health Let's Do This – Lose Weight](#) website provides online support to help you lose weight and includes access to the NHS 12 week weight loss plan.

The NHS 12 week fitness plan will support your weight loss plan as well as improve your health. This is aimed at beginners and will help get you into the habit of regular exercise over the course of the programme. It is structured but flexible enough to allow you to fit the exercise sessions around your other weekly commitments.

Information and advice on healthy eating and becoming more active is available from:

- [One You Eat Better \(website\)](#) - includes Easy Meals app for healthy meals and the Change4Life Food Scanner to help reduce levels of sugar in your diet
- [Better Health - Get Active \(website\)](#) - includes tips on getting active for all, including the downloadable Active 10 app, as well as tailored advice for those living with a long-term condition.

## What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

### Urgent Health Advice

For urgent health advice about physical or mental health, when it's not an emergency, please call 111 from any landline or mobile phone. You can also visit [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk). The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

### Life Threatening Emergencies

For something life threatening – severe bleeding, breathing difficulties or chest pains – please dial 999.

### GP surgeries are still open

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The contents of this information has been reviewed and approved by Dr Julian Hobbs, Medical Director, Clinical Governance Committee of The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust.

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GP practice staff are also helping patients to manage their conditions at home while they wait for hospital appointments. GP surgeries are still open and are working differently to how they did before the COVID-19 pandemic and GP practices continue to make best use of telephone, online and video consultations. Face-to-face appointments are still being given to those who need it.

When you phone or use an online form to contact your GP surgery to make an appointment, you will be asked some questions which are designed to help staff guide you to the most appropriate clinical person to help you with your condition. This could be a nurse, clinical pharmacist, physician's associate, GP or paramedic.

## Contact Us

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