

## Plastic Surgery

# How to Manage a Flap

### What is a flap?

A flap is when part of the skin, whilst still attached to a blood supply, is moved around to cover an area of skin nearby that has been removed such as skin cancer, burn or any trauma.

### How to manage your flap

After surgery you may have a dressing in place. You will get an appointment to attend the dressing clinic, usually around a week later, if you do not have one.

If you do not need any further dressings, you will no longer need to attend the dressing clinic; however, sometimes you may need to attend for a few weeks. This is because some people heal quicker than others.

### Bathing

Do not get the flap wet for the first 48hrs, after this time wash regularly, pat dry.

### Bruising

It is normal to have some bruising after surgery, this will settle. Some people bruise more than others, especially if they are taking medication which thins the blood.

### Resting

If your flap was on the arm or leg, please try and elevate the arm or leg when possible in the first week. If your flap was on the face, try not to lean forward for more than necessary in the first week.

### Scars

Scars can take around 18 months to heal completely. After two weeks, **massage the scar firmly with a moisturiser of your choice, up and outwards towards the heart**, this will help to mature the scar and can sometimes appear less lumpy over time.

Try to get familiar with your flap, you will not damage the skin, it will not come off.

### Signs of infection

**Redness / pus leaking from the flap / smelly / hot to touch / swelling**

**Any bleeding or any of the above signs that you are concerned about please get in touch on the number overleaf and we will get back to you.**

### Sutures

Depending on which type of sutures (stitches) your consultant has used, these may need removing in the dressing clinic, usually within 5-7 days. Dissolvable sutures do not need removing; these will dissolve over the next fortnight or so. If they are still visible after this time or causing discomfort, please get in touch.

## Sunlight

Apply a sun cream factor 30 or above to protect the skin.

There are camouflage creams available if you are concerned about the appearance of your flap, please speak with your GP to find out more.

## Tattoo

If you have had a flap in the middle of your tattoo and you want to cover the area again, it is important that you give the flap time to heal approximately 18 months, and then you can tattoo over the flap.

**WE DO NOT RECOMMEND TATTOO'S IF YOU HAVE HAD A MELANOMA.**

## Local anaesthetic, which means you are awake during surgery

A local anaesthetic can last up to a couple of hours before it begins to wear off. There are no restrictions to driving or flying after a local anaesthetic, however, please note that if you have a dressing in place that restricts your vision or restricts movement to your arm/leg, you may be advised not to drive back home, and you may need to check with your insurance going forward.

## General anaesthetic, which means you are asleep during surgery

The effects of general anaesthetic can stay in your system for up to 48 hours. It can make you feel lightheaded and tired. You may also feel nauseas which can lead to vomiting. It's important you have a responsible adult with you for the first 24 hours and you should not do the following for 48 hours :

- Drive a car, bicycle or any form of motorised transport.
- Drink alcohol or smoke
- Operate machinery or electrical appliances.
- Make any important decisions or sign any legal documents.
- Make yourself inaccessible to the person looking after you i.e. locking bathroom door
- Eat heavy or greasy meals which could result in nausea.

It is important to rest, eat light meals and drink plenty of water.

**If you are concerned with the appearance of your flap we will be happy to discuss further.**

### Contacts:

**Dressings – Jenny Green 07385416169**

**Secretaries – Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm  
01484 355397  
01484 347313**

**Urgent, out of hours & weekends go to your GP or A&E**

**If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :**

Jenifer Green - Clinical Nurse Specialist in Plastics  
Surgical Out Patients  
Huddersfield Royal Infirmary and Calderdale Royal Hospital

Mobile: 07385416169

[www.cht.nhs.uk](http://www.cht.nhs.uk)

**If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.**

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww. danych kontaktowych

ਚ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਪ੍ਰਾਚੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ,  
ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਵਿਭਾਗ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور فارمیٹ طرزبان میں درکار ہوں، تو  
برائے مہربانی مندرجہ بالا شعبے میں ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

"إذا احتجت الحصول على هذه المعلومة بشكل مغاير أو مترجمة إلى لغة مختلفة فيرجى منك الاتصال بالقسم  
المذكور أعلاه"