

Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Department

REMOVAL OF SKIN LESIONS FROM FACE AND SCALP

What are skin lesions?

Skin lesion is a term that refers to an area of abnormal looking cells on the surface of the skin. The only way of knowing for sure what the lesion consists of is to examine the cells under a microscope.

Surgical removal of skin lesions

The affected area on your head or face is cleaned with an antiseptic solution and marked out with a surgical marker. The area around the lesion is then numbed by injection of local anaesthetic. Once the lesion has been removed, the skin may be stitched in one of three ways:

- 1. Primary Closure:** If there is enough skin left to cover the operation site, the skin is simply pulled together and stitched.
- 2. Local Flap Closure:** This involves rearranging the surrounding skin to close the excision site. This “flap” is then stitched into place. If it is necessary to raise a flap this does leave a larger scar but wherever possible the flap will be designed such that the scar lies in natural skin creases.
- 3. Skin Graft:** This may be necessary if the lesion is located in an area where the skin is already pulled tight e.g. the forehead or if a large area has been removed. ‘Spare’ skin is removed from another location, such as near the collarbone or in front of the ear, and stitched in place over the operation site. A surgical pressure dressing may be stitched/clipped in place over the graft to keep it clean and secure while it heals.

What are the potential risks and complications of this operation?

- **Bruising:** Bruising is extremely common after any surgery, especially on the face due to its rich blood supply. Following removal of lesions on the scalp or forehead, bruising underneath the eyes is very likely. Please be assured this is a normal and expected occurrence that will subside on its own.
- **Bleeding:** Your wound may bleed a little after the procedure. If this occurs, place a clean cotton handkerchief or the gauze we will give to you over the affected area and apply constant pressure for approximately 15 minutes.
- **Infection:** If your wound becomes swollen, very red, very tender or starts producing a discharge, see your GP who may prescribe you antibiotics.

- **Scarring:** Any surgery will result in a scar. In most cases, the scar will appear pink to start with and eventually virtually disappear. However, sometimes the scar may remain visible. It may look a different colour from the surrounding skin or be raised above the surface of the skin. Rarely, the scar may feel numb or even painful.
- **Incomplete removal:** If the lesion is found to be cancerous, there is a risk that the initial surgery did not result in the removal of all the cancerous cells. If the surgeons feel this is a risk in your case, they will discuss further treatment options with you at your follow-up appointment.

How do I care for my wound and stitches after my operation?

Keep your wound clean and dry until your stitches have been removed. Your stitches will require removal in 7-10 days and you will be advised whether to attend clinic here or your own GP surgery to have them removed. Please also continue applying the ointment we give you 2-3 times daily until the stitches have been removed.

Will the procedure be painful?

The procedure itself will not hurt, as the area will be numb. You are advised to take a mild painkiller before the local anaesthetic wears off, as the operation site will be tender for a few days.

General Advice

Activities – We advise you to refrain from any strenuous exercise for the rest of the day, (and if possible, until your stitches are removed) as this may place strain on the fine sutures and any activity that increases your heart rate will also increase the risk of bleeding. Avoid swimming and keep the wound dry as much as you can.

Driving – If you have had a local anaesthetic, there are no restrictions on driving. However, if the lesion is close to either eye, the local anaesthetic injection may cause your vision to be impaired slightly for a while after your procedure.

Will I need a follow-up appointment?

An appointment will be made for you in the outpatient clinic to discuss the results of the laboratory tests on your lesion. If further treatment is required, it will be discussed with you at this second appointment. You will be sent this appointment in the post.

Contact us

If you have any concerns after your procedure you can contact the OMFS Department on (01225) 82 4260 between 09:00 and 17:00 Monday to Friday. Outside of these hours contact (01225) 428 331 and ask the switchboard operator for the on- call doctor for Oral Maxillofacial Surgery, bleep 7813.