



Skin Concept

### **SKIN SURGERY INFORMATION**

#### Questions on Types of Common Procedures:

Q. What is a punch biopsy?

A. This is the sampling of the skin using a cookie cutter like instrument. Normally, one to two stitches are required. This will leave you with a small scar.

Q. What is a shave biopsy?

A. This is the sampling of a raised skin growth with a surgical blade or a razor blade. Bleeding will be stopped using either electrocautery or application of a solution.

Q. What is curettage and cautery?

A. This is often performed after a shave biopsy. The remaining skin lesion is scooped out with a spoon shaped or ring shaped instrument (curettage), after which electrocautery is applied. The cycle may be repeated several times to prevent recurrence of the skin growth.

Q. What is an excision?

A. This procedure completely removes a skin growth with a surgical blade. This usually results in an elliptical wound down to subcutaneous tissue (fat). The wound is then closed with one to two layers of sutures.

#### General Questions on Procedure:

Q. Will the procedure hurt?

A. You will receive an injection of local anesthetic into the skin; this will hurt for several minutes. After which, you should only feel pressure and heat.

Q. How long does the procedure take?

A. It depends on the type of procedure. Punch biopsy, shave biopsy, curettage and cautery will take approximately 15 minutes, and a simple excision will take approximately 30 minutes.

Q. How long should the stitches stay in?

A. It depends where the procedure was performed on the body. The stitches usually stay in place from 5 to 14 days. They do not dissolve on their own and they need to be removed. Please bear this in mind before you make any plans for holidays after the procedure. Please refrain from heavy lifting or exercise for 4 weeks after the procedure.

Q. Should I bring someone with me for the procedure?

A. We will allow one person to accompany you in the room during your procedure. It is a good idea to have someone to take you home after a procedure.



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Q. Do I need a follow-up appointment with the doctor?

A. Apart from an appointment for stitch removal, you may need to see the doctor again about the result of the biopsy and to discuss further treatment. Please discuss this with the doctor after the procedure.

### Questions on Potential Complications:

Q. What can go wrong during the procedure?

A. The procedures are usually well tolerated. Rarely, fainting, significant bleeding and allergy to local anesthetic injection may occur. To avoid fainting, please remember to eat some food prior to your procedure. Please let the doctor know if you have any known allergies and previous reaction to local anesthetics.

Q. What can go wrong after the procedure?

A. Bleeding, infection and wound dehiscence are rare complications. Please read our post surgery information leaflet for more details.

Q. What kind of scar can I expect?

If you have stitches, then a white linear scar will result. The red colour of the scar will fade with time. Rarely, a widened, thickened or keloid scar may occur. Keloid scar can be painful or itchy and difficult to treat. If you have a shave biopsy or curettage and cautery, you should expect a white, round and sometimes slightly depressed scar.

### Questions on Medications and Preceding Illnesses:

Q. I am on blood thinner; do I need to stop this medication?

A. You should inform the doctor of all your medications. In general, we do not ask you to stop any medications for the procedures. If you have regular blood tests for coumadin (warfarin), you should make sure the INR is below 3-3.5 prior to your surgery.

Q. I have a pacemaker, would there be a problem with electrocautery?

A. You should inform the doctor that you have a pacemaker. The risk of developing a problem is minimal with new devices.

Q. I was told to take prophylactic antibiotics prior to any surgery?

A. If you are at increased risk of getting infective endocarditis (infection of the inner lining of the heart), you may or may not need to take antibiotics 1 hour before skin surgery. For most skin biopsies, antibiotics are not required. Please discuss this with your doctor beforehand.

Please also read our post surgery information. If you have any further questions, please feel free to discuss them with your doctor. -Y.W.Wong Oct 2013 Version 1.1