

*Better
Together*

Patient information

Plastic Surgery

Trauma and Orthopaedics Directorate

Your consultant/doctor has said you need Plastic Surgery.

What is Plastic Surgery?

Plastic Surgery is required when soft tissue or skin is required to cover a defect such as muscle or skin loss. It is required to restore, repair and improve the lost or injured part.

There are different types of Plastic Surgery

- **Split Skin Graft:** This is when skin is taken from another part of the body to cover the defect, that is, where the skin is missing from. The area the skin is taken from is called the Donor Site.
- **Local Flap:** This is when muscle or tissue is taken from an area close to the defect, this usually happens when bone is exposed and muscle is required to cover the defect. Sometimes a Split Skin Graft will also be needed.
- **Free Flap:** This is when muscle is taken from an area away from the defect. Again, this is required to cover the area where muscle and skin has been lost. This method is used when a local flap is not possible. Split Skin Graft may also be required.

What are the benefits?

Bone, tissue, muscle or skin can be lost in serious injuries. After injury it is important that the wound is cleaned and the defect repaired. It is when your doctors have been unable to close the wound by using stitches or clips that there may be a need for Plastic Surgery. The injured part is repaired by using one of some of the methods mentioned above. Until the area is covered there is a greater risk that the bone can become infected.

What are the risks of having Plastic Surgery?

There is a risk with every procedure. There is always a risk of failure; risks can vary from patient to patient. Your consultant will discuss these risks with you in full during the consent process.

What happens if I agree to have the surgery?

Your doctor will explain what the planned operation to you and answer any questions you may have. You will be told of the risks and benefits involved. Your written consent will be taken, this is a legal requirement which confirms that you understand the procedure and what it involves. If you would like a relative, friend or carer present during this time this is acceptable and encouraged.

Plastic Surgeons may perform the surgery, it is usually here at the Royal Liverpool Hospital but it may be necessary to transfer you to a different hospital for your operation. If this is the case then your doctor will explain why and when this will happen.

Other surgery may be required at the same time, for example, application or adjustment of either internal or external fixation,

What happens if I decide not to have the surgery?

The consultant will explain what can happen if you decide not to have the recommended treatment. It is a patients legal right to be able to refuse treatment at any time.

Getting ready for your operation

- Tests may be required in preparation for your surgery. This is to ensure you are safe, well and fit for anaesthesia and surgery.
- You may have already had some surgery since your admission to hospital however you will be seen again by an anaesthetist and your doctor. Again, if you have any further questions or concerns these can be discussed.
- You will be told when to stop eating and drinking before you operation.
- Sometimes surgery may be cancelled because you need further tests or a more urgent case takes priority over yours.
- You will be seen by other doctors and nurses during your hospital stay who will again ask many questions about your general health and lifestyle and home. Other staff e.g. physiotherapists, occupational therapists and possibly a social worker will see you, this is to ensure you receive the best possible care.
- It's important that we know what medication you were taking prior to your admission to hospital.

Your hospital stay

- The length of stay is dependent on the severity of your injuries. We aim not to keep you in hospital any longer than necessary; we need to ensure you are comfortable and fit for discharge.

- Please leave all cash and valuables at home. If you need to bring valuables into hospital, these can be sent to General Office for safekeeping. General Office is open between 8.30 and 4.30 Monday to Friday. Therefore, if you are discharged outside these times we will not be able to return your property until General Office is open. The Trust does not accept responsibility for items not handed in for safekeeping.
- During your stay you will be encouraged to undertake your personal care.
- During your treatment it's important that you receive a healthy diet to assist with tissue/bone repair. If eating or weight loss is, or becomes a problem, then a dietician may assess you and help provide your dietary requirements.

The day of your operation

- You will be required to shower or wash. A gown and disposable underwear will be provided. If you are unable to perform this task, don't worry, you will be helped by the nurses looking after you.
- You will be asked to remove jewellery, plain bands can be worn but they will be taped.
- Any body piercings will have to be removed as well as false nails, nail polish and makeup.
- If you are taking regular medication then you will be advised if you need to take it, as usual, on the day of your surgery.
- A bracelet with your personal details will be attached to your wrist.

- A doctor will use a marker pen to draw an arrow close to the area being operated on.
- An anaesthetist may prescribe some medication for you to take before your operation. A member of the nursing staff will give this to you.
- You will be taken to the operating theatre on your bed. A nurse will accompany you.
- If you have glasses, dentures or a hearing aid they can stay with you on your journey to the operating theatre.
- When you arrive in the operating theatre the ward nurse will leave you with the theatre staff who will check your details with you again.

What should I expect after my operation?

- After your operation you will be kept in the theatre recovery room before being transferred to the ward.
- You will be given oxygen to breathe through a mask. Your doctors will decide when this can stop.
- You will be given some fluids intravenously. Again, your doctors will decide when this can stop.
- At regular intervals a nurse will check your pulse, blood pressure, breathing rate and temperature. The area that has been operated on will also be checked.
- You will be given regular painkillers. **It's important that if you feel your pain is not being controlled that you inform the nurse immediately.**

- The nursing staff will tell you when you can start taking sips of water. Anaesthetic can make some people sick. If you feel sick then we advise that you stop drinking until the feeling has passed. The nursing staff may offer medication to help the sick feeling go away.
- Almost all patients are given an injection of a blood thinning drug daily, this is to reduce the risk of clots forming in the lower limbs. This can occur after lower limb injury, surgery and reduced mobility.
- You may have to continue having the injections when you are discharged home. Your doctors will tell you if this is required.
- You will have some post-operative tests e.g. blood tests.
- You will be seen by physiotherapists and an occupational therapist. They will decide and organise any treatment that is required.
- You may not be allowed to mobilise in the early stages to allow swelling to reduce and wounds to begin to heal. You will be advised by your doctors and other members of staff if this is the case.

What can you do to help your recovery?

- The doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and maybe other members of staff will organise a plan of care in order to enhance your recovery and safe discharge from hospital. It's vital that you listen to the advice they give.
- **If you smoke you will be advised to stop as both active and passive smoking is known to have a delayed effect on wound healing and bone formation.**

Smoking will prolong healing time and consequently treatment time. In some cases it can cause failure of treatment.

Wound care

- Generally the dressings that are applied in the operating theatre are required to be left undisturbed. Your doctors will have written instructions in your clinical notes how your wounds are managed after your surgery.
- Dressing to flaps and split skin grafts are usually left undisturbed for five days following surgery.
- Donor sites are usually left undisturbed for ten to fourteen days following surgery.

Going home/discharge information

- Many patients are concerned about going home and how they will manage. We do try to make your hospital journey easier by providing you with support, advice and care throughout treatment.

Dressings

- If you have a dressing on your wound(s) you must keep it clean, dry and left undisturbed until your clinic appointment or seen by a Community Nurse.
- If you require a Community Nurse to visit, the ward staff will arrange this prior to your discharge. The Community Nurse may visit you in your own home.
- You will be provided with some dressings.

Pain relief and medication

- You will be advised about your medication by nursing staff before you leave the ward.

Exercises

- If you are given exercises to perform by a physiotherapist it's important that you do them as shown.
- If you have been given a splint/brace or support by a physiotherapist or occupational therapist then it's important that you carry on wearing it as shown.

Getting back to normal

- Remember, it's normal to feel more tired than usual for a few days after having an operation.
- Your doctors will give you advice when about leisure activities and returning to work.

Problems

Please contact us if you have any of the following problems:

- If the area around the graft becomes hot and/or swollen.
- If there is redness which feels hot to the touch and extends beyond the dressing.
- If you have a smelly discharge coming through the dressing.
- If you feel the condition of the graft is worsening.
- If there is bleeding that will not stop with gentle pressure.

- If the dressing falls off.
- If you have increased pain that is not relieved by taking your normal painkillers.
- If you feel generally unwell or flu-like.

Clinic

- You will be given a clinic appointment, it's important that you attend.
- If you require ambulance transport then you need to ring this number at least three working day before your appointment to arrange **Tel: 0151 706 4676,**
Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 4676.

Aftercare

- The doctors/nurses in clinic will tell you when your wound(s) are completely healed. Once healed you can wash the areas gently with a mild, un-perfumed soap and pat dry with a clean towel.
- You will be shown how to massage the area with a moisturising cream.
- Keep the healed area out of the sun or apply a total sun block for at least the next two summers as the area is fragile and will easily burn in hot sun.
- Be aware that the colour of a healing skin graft may change depending on the time of year. Some patients have noticed that the area may be pink in the summer months and purple in the winter months. This is normal and you should not be concerned.
- Avoid wearing tight clothing that may rub against the area.

Further information

Secretaries

Secretary to Mr Nayagam

Tel: 0151 706 3440

Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 3440

Secretary to Mr Giotakis

Tel: 0151 706 3545

Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 3545

Secretary to Mr Narayan

Tel: 0151 706 3545

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Madeleine Mooney

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Tel: 0151 706 2771

Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 2771

Liverpool Limb Reconstruction Unit:
www.limbrecon.com

Fagends
Tel: 0800 1952131
www.stopsmoking.org.uk

Directgov.
www.dwp.gov/directgov.uk

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All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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