

PREOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS AND INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR SURGICAL PROCEDURE

I have scheduled you to have a growth excised in the office. Excision is the medical term for removal of a lesion from your skin. The wound is closed with stitches (deep ones that dissolve in 2 months) and superficial ones that are removed in 7-14 days. The goals of the procedure are complete removal of the growth and a good cosmetic result. Unless otherwise instructed take all of your regularly prescribed medications and eat normally. After the procedure most patients may resume their normal activities; sometimes there are temporary restrictions on sports, exercising, lifting and other physical activities.

Some tips on planning your procedure

Unless you have been told the procedure should be done ASAP *don't schedule it:*

- Within two weeks of travel
- Near a major event (e.g. wedding, presentation, exam)
- You cannot *swim* or go into a *hot tub* with a stitched wound

In most instances I will recommend that *vigorous exercise be discontinued* especially when there is a risk of sutures coming out and the wound falling apart (dehiscence).

Anesthesia

We inject anesthesia that numbs the skin around the growth by affecting local nerves. There is no significant absorption of the anesthetic so you are fully awake for the procedure. The discomfort of the injection is similar to having blood drawn and lasts for 10-20 seconds. Once the skin is numb (about 2-5 minutes) you will have no further pain from the procedure. In the vast majority of cases you will be able to drive yourself home, but it is always wise to have a family member or friend with you for moral support.

Cautions

Please tell us if:

1. You faint or pass out easily. If you do it's very important to eat 2 hours prior to the procedure.
2. You have had difficulty with bleeding during prior surgical procedures.
3. You have a pacemaker.
4. You have an internal defibrillator device.
5. You are taking aspirin.
6. You are taking Coumadin or warfarin.
7. You are taking arthritis medications, anti-inflammatory drugs (e.g. Motrin), persantine (dipyridamole), plavix.
8. You are taking vitamin E.
9. You require oral antibiotics before dental cleanings, have artificial joints or artificial joints or artificial heart valves.

Bleeding

There is always minor bleeding at the time of surgery which is very easily controlled. In rare instances there is delayed bleeding and the wound swells and is painful (hematoma). In my experience the following minimize excessive bleeding at the time of surgery:

1. *No alcoholic beverages for 2 days* prior to the procedure (including beer).
2. Aspirin. Please avoid taking aspirin for 14 days prior to your procedure unless on a doctor's orders. If a doctor has recommended aspirin for you, ask your doctor if it can be temporarily stopped and inform us of the decision before the surgery date. Many things contain aspirin (e.g. Alka Seltzer) so read labels carefully. One aspirin can decrease your ability to clot (thin your blood) for 2 weeks!
3. Motrin, Ibuprofen and other so-called nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs should be discontinued for 5 days.

How come so much tissue needed to be removed?

In order to close an excised wound evenly as a thin line, the optimal length to width ratio is 3:1. Picture trying to close a circle from side to side; you get two loops of tissue at either end and these need to be removed in order for the wound to heal in a straight line. If you have a mole that is 6 mm wide (1/4 inch) and I excise it with margins of 2 mm (1/12 inch), this makes the actual excision width 10 mm (5/12 inch). The length (3:1 length to width ratio) of the excision is 30 mm (1 and 1/4 inches).

Scarring

When cut skin heals it always forms a scar. Every effort will be made to minimize the appearance of the scar but certain locations (e.g. chest, around a joint) are a higher risk for thicker or spread scars. If you form keloids or don't heal well, please let me know.

Postoperative care

We will give you detailed instructions after surgery is completed. If the wound is in an area that you cannot reach please arrange for a family member or friend to do the wound care for you. You will not be able to bathe or shower the area for 24 hours. You will need Telfa (non-stick) pads, Vaseline and adhesive tape for the postoperative care.

Discomfort

Postoperative pain in most cases is mild, lasts less than 24 hours and can be controlled with Tylenol. In some instances I will prescribe a narcotic for one or two nights. Aspirin and Motrin should be avoided for 3 days.

Questions or Concerns and Advice

Surgical procedures can be intimidating so if you have questions or need reassurance contact us! Our goal is to make your experience as smooth as possible. Using a Walkman during the procedure is a helpful relaxation technique.