

# Facial Reconstruction Post-Operative Instructions

---

## What are my post-operative instructions?

- Have someone drive you home after surgery and help you at home for 1-2 days.
- Get plenty of rest and follow balance diet.
- Do not take aspirin (or products that contain aspirin) unless approved by your surgeon.
- Do not smoke. Smoking decreases blood flow. It can delay wound healing or cause tissue loss.
- You can ice the area for 10 minutes every 1/2 hour for the first post op day.

## What should my activity level be?

- Start walking as soon as possible, this helps to reduce swelling and lowers the chance of blood clots.
- You may tire easily. Plan on taking it easy for the first week.
- No strenuous activity, including sex and heavy housework for 2 weeks post op.
- No bending over for 3 days and 3 nights. On the 4th post op day you can start easing back into activities.
- Keep your head elevated at a 45 degree angle for 3 days and 3 nights.
- Sleep with your head elevated at a 45 degree angle for 3 days and 3 nights. You can use 2 couch pillows to do this or sleep in a recliner.

## How do I take care of my incision?

### Primary Closure:

- You may shower after 48 hours.

- Avoid exposure to sun for at least 12 months.
- Always use a strong sunblock, if sun exposure is unavoidable (SPF 30 or greater).
- If there is a steri strip on the incision, leave it on until the first post op visit.
- If your incision was closed with skin glue, it will slowly flake off over the first couple of weeks
- You can wash area with soap and water and apply Vaseline to incision daily.

### **Skin Graft/Bolster:**

- Do not try to remove this dressing. It will remain in place until your first post op appointment.
- You may shower 48 hours after surgery just avoid getting the bolster (dressing) wet.
- Avoid exposure to sun for at least 12 months.
- Always use a strong sunblock, if sun exposure is unavoidable (SPF 30 or greater).
- Expect the graft to be mottled or purplish when the bolster is removed. This is normal.
- Call if you experience increase swelling. There may be fluid accumulating under the graft.
- Mild oozing is expected and not uncommon.

### **Nasolabial or Forehead Flaps:**

- There will be a small bridge of skin and there will be more drainage. This is expected.
- You can use a Q tip with peroxide and water (1/2 and 1/2) to gently clean along the bridged area.
- The sutures (stitches) will be removed at the first post op visit.
- No dressing is necessary.

- You can apply Vaseline daily or twice a day (if needed) to the incision line and on the exposed tissue of the bridge.
- This bridge will stay in place until the final surgery. The final division and inset of flap will occur at that time.

### **Donor Site:**

- The donor site is the place where the surgeon takes skin to cover your open wound on your face.
- The usual places for donor sites of the face are; the skin in front of your ear (preauricular area), the firm part of your ear if cartilage is needed or your neck.
- These donor sites are generally closed with sutures (stitches).
- If the donor site has a steri strip on it, leave it on until the first post op day.
- If the donor site does not have a steri strip on it, you can wash it after 24 hours with soap and water and then apply Vaseline daily.

### **How should I expect to feel?**

- Maximum discomfort should occur in the first few days, improving each day thereafter.
- Bruising, swelling, numbness, tightness and tenderness of skin for 10 - 14 days.
- Face can look and feel strange and be distorted from the swelling.
- Sensation may be decreased. This may or may not fully return.

### **When should I call my doctor?**

- If you have increased swelling or bruising.
- If you have increased redness along the incision.
- If you have increased pain that is not relieved by your pain medication.
- If you have any side effect from your medication; rash, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, etc.

- If you have a temperature greater than 101.0 F
- If you have yellow or green drainage from the incisions or notice a foul odor.
- If you have bleeding from the incisions that is difficult to control with light pressure.

### **Who should I call if I have questions?**

- **Clinic Phone (734) 998-6022**

For questions and prescription refills please contact our clinic at during office hours (Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)

- **Hospital Paging (734) 936-6267**

After hours and on weekends, call and ask for the Plastic Surgeon on call.

### **How do I manage my pain?**

#### **Pre-operative Instructions:**

- Prior to your surgery, pain medication will be prescribed by your Primary care physician or referring physician.
- If you **do not** have an established Primary care physician, please call the Physician referral service at **1-800-211-8181**.
- To establish yourself with a primary care physician **prior** to your surgery, please schedule an appointment with the new primary care physician.

#### **Post-operative Instructions:**

- After having surgery, it is expected you will experience some pain even with pain medication. This is a normal part of recovery.
- You will be provided a prescription for pain medicine that will last until your first return post-op visit.
- At your first post-op visit, your pain will be evaluated. The surgical team will manage your pain for the acute recovery phase.
- Acute pain management for major surgery is typically 6 to 12 weeks.
- Acute pain management for minor procedures is typically 7-10 days.
- You may not drive while you are taking narcotic pain medication or

otherwise instructed by your surgical team.

**Managing Prescription Refills:**

- Please call the clinic at **734-998-6022** for medication refills.
- You may also contact us using the Patient Portal at <https://www.myuofmhealth.org>.
- Messages received after hours or on the weekend will be processed the next business day.
- Please allow 24 hours or one business day to have your request reviewed by your surgical team.

Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by the University of Michigan Health System (UMHS) for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by UMHS and for which UMHS does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition or your treatment plan.

Author: Erin Larowe  
Reviewers: Lauren Frankel, PA

Patient Education by [University of Michigan Health System](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](#). Last Revised 5/2016