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](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.