

# Bolster Care

## Post-Operative Instructions

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### **What is a bolster?**

At the time of your surgery, your surgeon will apply a dressing called a “bolster.” A bolster is a type of dressing that is sewn on top of a skin graft. This dressing is to remain in place until your post op visit in clinic 5-7 days after surgery.

A bolster has two functions:

1. It holds the skin graft in place to prevent movement of the graft on the underlying tissues, thereby allowing the blood supply to work into the graft.
2. One cause of graft failure is the possibility of blood or serum collecting beneath the graft (raising the graft from the underlying tissues and preventing revascularization). So the second benefit of a bolster is to prevent fluid from accumulating between the underlying tissue and the graft. The bolster applies enough pressure to prevent fluid from accumulating but not so much that it will interfere with the blood supply (circulation).

### **What are my post-operative instructions?**

\_\_\_\_You are not to shower while the bolster is on (5-7 days after surgery).

\_\_\_\_You may shower with your bolster on just do not let the water hit the bolster directly.

- Depending on the location of the bolster and type of graft you have (FTSG: full thickness skin graft vs. STSG: split thickness skin graft) you

may not be able to shower for a couple weeks after your surgery.

Showering will be determined by your physician.

- If you notice oozing of fluid from around the bolster, you can use a gauze or q tip to gently dab around the bolster to absorb the drainage.
- If the drainage has hardened around the bolster, you can use ½ strength peroxide mixed with water and gently cleanse around the bolster with q tips that have been dipped in this solution. Never double dip.
- Under no circumstances are you to attempt to remove the bolster.

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

- (734) 998-6022, Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
- After hours and on weekends, call Hospital Paging at (734) 936-6267 and ask for the Plastic Surgeon on call.

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Author: Erin Larowe  
Reviewers: Patricia McKenzie, RN

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