

# EXCISION OF A SKIN LESION

## THE PROCEDURE

This refers simply to the cutting out of a mole or another “lump or bump” on the skin. The wound is then repaired with stitches.

## WHAT DOES IT INVOLVE?

The procedure is performed under local anaesthetic (with you awake and the skin numbed by giving an injection).

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

This is a quick and simple procedure with a quick recovery.

## HOW LONG DOES THE SURGERY TAKE?

The operation itself may take between 10-minutes and 45-minutes, depending upon what is being removed. You will be in the operating theatre for slightly longer than this for the preparation of the surgery and the injection of the local anaesthetic.

## WHAT IS THE RECOVERY PERIOD?

After the surgery the wound will be dressed with medical tape. This is splash-proof and shower-proof (but not bath-proof!). You will be able to shower from the day after surgery, and dab the tape dry with a clean towel, kitchen towel (or even use a hair-dryer on a cold setting). You will be able to return to sedentary

activity (i.e. an office job or light duties) the following day, but should avoid strenuous physical activity for a minimum of 2-weeks. Stitches are removed between 1-and 2weeks after the surgery.

## HOW LONG BEFORE DAILY ACTIVITIES MAY BE RESUMED?

Strenuous activity should be avoided for at least 2-weeks. You will be able to drive the following day if the operation was on your face, head or neck. If the operation was elsewhere, it is advisable to avoid driving for at least a week. This is because if you had to perform an emergency stop or similar manoeuvre the wound may come apart (from seatbelt pressure or from a sudden movement of your arm or leg). Finally, if the operation was on your face or head, it is advisable not to bend down for 48-hours after the operation, to minimise the risk of bleeding (for example, when doing up shoe laces, bring your foot up whilst sitting down, rather than bending down).

## WHAT ARE THE SUCCESS RATES?

This is a safe, reliable and simple procedure with a low complication rate.

## WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS?

These include wound infection, bleeding (normally "nuisance" bleeding through the dressing), delayed wound healing resulting in opening of the wound (which may result in either the stitches being left in longer than originally planned, or the need for further dressings on the wound) and the formation of a lumpy scar (known as a hypertrophic or keloid scar).

A further problem occasionally encountered is "suture spitting" -this refers to the deeper dissolvable stitches poking out of the wound at some time, often several weeks after the surgery. This happens because sometimes these stitches do not dissolve as quickly as intended, and they then try to work their way out of the wound in much the same way as a splinter would. These stitches can either be removed at one of your hospital visits or they may work their way out on their own.