

# Surgery

## SKIN SUBSTITUTE

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Skin substitutes are like special coverings for wounds, and they are used for a few important reasons.

- **Protection:** The skin is the body's natural shield, and when it gets damaged on the feet, it can be hard for the body to heal by itself. Skin substitutes act as a protective layer, like a bandage, to keep the wound safe from germs and other harmful things.
- **Speeding Up Healing:** Skin substitutes contain helpful things that encourage the body to heal faster. They can make the healing process go more quickly and smoothly.
- **Reducing Pain:** Wounds can be painful. Skin substitutes can help reduce the pain by covering the wound and providing relief.

There are a variety of different skin substitutes available. Your doctor will decide which one will work best for your specific wound and medical history.

- **Acellular Dermal Matrix:** This is a medical product made from human or animal skin tissue that has had all its cellular components removed, leaving mainly collagen proteins.
- **Artificial Skin:** This is made in a lab and is like a kind of plastic that looks and acts like real skin. It helps protect the wound and allows it to heal.
- **Natural Skin from Donors:** Skin may be donated by people who have passed away.
- **Animal Skin:** In some cases, the skin from animals like pigs or fish can be used. It's treated and prepared so it can be put on a human wound safely.

Skin substitutes need to be put on a wound bed that has been cleaned and prepared to make sure there is contact between the wound bed and the graft. Skin substitutes take the place of the missing skin layer and provide coverage over the wounds. Skin substitutes undergo certain sterile processes, techniques and controls prior to use on wounds.

### During Surgery

- You will either be given local anesthesia or moderate sedation for this procedure. This depends on the size and depth of the wound.
  - With local anesthesia, medication will be injected to numb the area and you will stay awake.
  - With moderate sedation, you will be given anxiety and pain medications through an IV. You will be awake and able to follow directions but will be calm and not feel pain.
- After you have been sedated properly, the surgeon will remove unhealthy tissue from the wound and wash the areas with a cleaning agent.
- Next, the surgeon will place the skin substitute over the area of the wound.
- The skin substitute will be secured in place with either staples or sutures.
- Depending on the wound needs, the area is then covered with a bandage or a negative pressure wound vacuum dressing (wound vac).
- The surgery will take about one and a half hours.

# After Surgery

## Recovery – What to Expect

- Your length of stay in the hospital will depend on the location, size and type of skin graft. Your surgery team will discuss the expected hospital stay based on your wound and management plan.
- If you are scheduled for an outpatient procedure, you will likely be discharged after a recovery period of two hours to assure your vital signs are stable and your pain and bleeding are controlled. If your pain or bleeding is uncontrolled, you may be admitted to the hospital for overnight recovery.
- If you are scheduled as an outpatient, be sure you have someone available to take you home after the surgery as anesthesia and pain medicine will make it unsafe for you to drive home on your own.
- Some patients will remain inpatient at the hospital after surgery.
- Your surgeon may give you painkillers after surgery to help you feel better.

## Wound Care

- Keep a dressing over the wound at all times.
- Wound care orders will be provided to you. Please follow these instructions, as ordered. These will be specific to your exact wound and dressing applied after surgery.
- The wound care orders will be performed by either home health, nursing facility/rehab nurse, or family member.
- If applicable, our office will submit for home health coverage to perform wound care. If your insurance company approves, you will be assigned a nurse to perform the wound care, at least, three times per week. Depending on frequency of dressing changes, a family member may have to perform dressing changes on alternate days.

## Activity

- Avoid walking on the foot as this will delay wound healing.
- Avoid wearing a regular shoe on the foot with the surgical wound.
- Your surgeon may prescribe a special offloading shoe, such as a surgical shoe or boot, or knee scooter, to help with transferring to the bathroom.
- Keep your foot up and elevated at heart level when sitting to prevent swelling and increased pain (swelling may cause pain).
- You should never bathe or soak your foot in liquid at any time. Cover the foot with a plastic bag or leg cast protector while showering to prevent getting the dressing wet.

## Medications

- Your surgeon will prescribe antibiotics, pain medication, and wound care instructions for discharge. Take your medication and follow orders as prescribed.
- While you are taking pain medication, be sure to monitor your bowel movements and drink enough fluids to prevent constipation.
- If you have any questions, please call the office or send a message through your MyChart portal.

## Follow-up

- You will follow up in our office in one or two weeks after your surgery. An X-ray of your foot may be necessary to evaluate progress.

## Call your doctor right away if you have any of the following symptoms:



- Bleeding from your surgical site
- Pain uncontrolled by pain medication
- Coolness and/or numbness in the leg or foot
- Changes in skin color on the leg or the foot
- Incision that opens up or pulls apart
- Signs of infection around the incision (redness, drainage, warmth, pain)
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Persistent nausea or diarrhea

## Call 911 or go to Baylor St. Luke's Medical Center if you experience the following:

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Rapid, irregular heartbeat
- Changes in your speech, difficulty concentrating, or weakness on one side of your body



- You will receive an appointment confirmation call one to two business days prior to the appointment. This information will also be available on your MyChart portal. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your procedure or care, please call the office or send a message through the MyChart portal.
- If you are having trouble logging on or need to set up, please call MyChart Support.

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