Why a skin graft is needed

Skin grafting is a very important part of healing your wound. Without it, your wound may take months to heal, be very painful, and be at risk for infection.

A skin graft may be used to:

- Treat a deep burn
- Help your wound heal faster
- Help reduce scarring and preserve function

Placing the graft

- You will go to the operating room and be given a medicine called anesthesia so you will sleep during the surgery.
- The damaged skin is removed.
- There are different types of skin grafts. An autograft uses your own healthy skin to replace the skin on your burn site. If you are having an autograft, your surgeon will remove a very thin layer of healthy skin from your body. This is called the donor site.
- The graft is placed and held there with:
  - Tissue glue
  - Skin staples
- You may notice the meshing of the graft when your dressings are removed after surgery. This is normal.
- Your wound is often more comfortable after being covered with a skin graft.
- Skin grafts usually heal in 7 to 10 days.
Donor site

- The donor site is a new wound made by taking the skin for the graft.
- The donor site feels like a burn because some of the tiny nerves and capillaries are exposed. After surgery, most people feel more pain from donor sites than from grafted areas.
- The donor site will be covered with a dressing and will heal in 7 to 14 days.

Skin graft care

- You will be given pain medicine to keep you as comfortable as possible.
- Your new skin graft is very fragile. Steps will be taken to protect your graft, such as bed rest, sitting or lying in certain positions, or using a splint or special type of dressing called a bolster.
- Your health care provider will explain any activity limits and answer any questions you may have.
- Avoid the use of tobacco products. Nicotine can limit blood flow to the wound, which can slow healing.
- Eat a well-balanced diet to help with wound healing. Ask your health care provider if you have questions about your diet.

Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

For more health information, contact the Library for Health Information at 614-293-3707 or e-mail health-info@osu.edu.

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