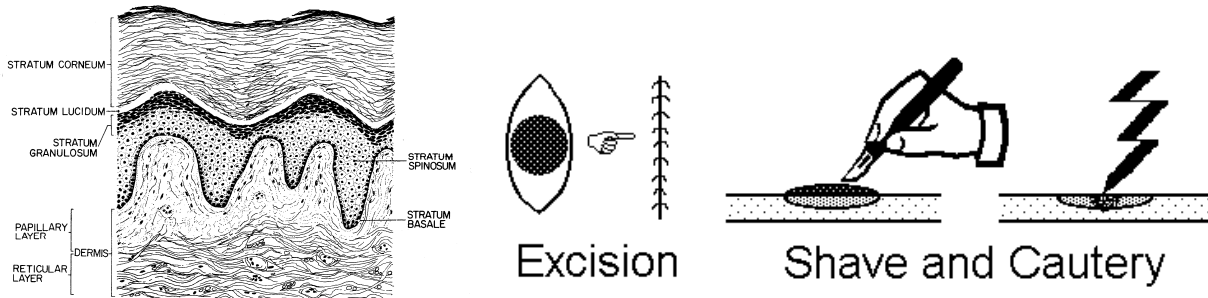


MINOR SURGERY

Skin incision A cut made in the skin either for operations such as scar revision or to remove lumps from beneath the skin such as a sebaceous cyst or lipoma. The cut is usually a little longer than any underlying lump to allow its complete removal. Stitches will be required.

Skin excision Skin lesions such as moles or skin tumours which require biopsy (see below) are removed with a margin of 1-2mm to ensure complete removal. It is usual to cut out the area as an ellipse which ensures a smooth flat scar after the stitches have been inserted in the scar. The scar will, however, be 3-4 times the length of the original skin lesion. In some areas such as the back and shoulder where poor quality scars are common (see below), I prefer to remove skin lesions as a circle and then allow them to heal without stitches.

Skin shave Some lesions which are considered to be benign are suitable to be shaved off, the base being cauterised (electrical sealing). No stitches are used.



Biopsy The removal of tissue for examination under a microscope by a pathologist. Results become available in 7-10 days. Tissue for examination can be obtained by any of techniques mentioned above.

Management Many wounds in exposed areas such as the face will be left uncovered after the operation. A plaster will be applied to other areas to avoid rubbing but this can be removed after 48hours. At this stage most wounds are watertight and can be got wet in the bath or shower. Plasters do not protect against infection and fresh air and water is healthier than a dirty, sweaty plaster. Please do not apply antiseptics such as Dettol or Savlon to the wound.

Moisturizer Natural oil production in the skin is disturbed by surgery and the skin around wounds often becomes dry and flakes. After 48hours, it is helpful to apply small amount of moisturizing cream such as Nivea, E45 or Diprobase, particularly after bathing.

Complications Any operation can be complicated by infection and bleeding. If you notice increased pain, swelling or redness in the area around the wound, please contact my secretary.

Scarring All operations leave a permanent scar. The type of scar is dependant on age, race and site of surgery (see below). If you have scarred poorly from previous surgery this may indicate that you form poor scars*.

Maturation Scars are often lumpy and red when immature. This is a reflection of normal healing. Maturation takes 12-24 months depending on age and skin type and during this time the pinkness and firmness of the scar gradually settles. This process can be helped by massaging the wound firmly with a moisturizing cream.

Stitches Areas with a good blood supply such as the face heal quickly whereas others such as the leg heal more slowly. The timing of stitch removal therefore varies being 5-7days in the face and 21days on the leg.

Age Scars are generally more noticeable in young people who heal more vigorously.

Race Some people are prone to special forms of scarring which can be very unsightly. **Hypertrophic scars** are more common in fair skinned people with red-hair, freckles or who tan poorly. They are red and raised above the surface of the skin and take much longer to mature than normal. **Keloid scars** occur in negro, asian and oriental skins. These spread from the site of the original surgery and develop into raised lumps.

Site Some areas are more prone to form poor scars such as the front of the chest, shoulder and neck. Wounds under tension such as on the back or over joints can stretch in the months after the stitches have been removed.