

Skin homografting



This operation provides emergency treatment for deep skin burns. Learn more about this type of graft, its purpose, and the signs to watch for after the operation.

What is a skin homograft?

This is a graft using skin from a donor. This skin serves as a temporary dressing. It's left in place for no more than 2 weeks (14 days).

Why would I need a homograft?

This operation is being recommended because it's not possible to perform an immediate graft using your own skin (autograft). Read the health fact sheet [Skin autografting](#).

There may be various reasons for delaying autografting. For example, the burns may be too extensive.

Homografting is done as an emergency measure to control:

- heat loss
- fluid loss
- risk of infection

Homografting also prepares the wound for autografting, which is the next step.

What are the risks?

The risks are very minimal. They are the same as those associated with any operation, such as the risks of bleeding and infection.

How should I prepare?

You must:

- be fasting, that is, have not eaten since the evening before
- have stopped taking certain medications

Your care team will tell you what you need to do.

How long does the operation take?

It varies depending on the size of the burn. Just before the graft, some areas of your skin may be shaved.

The wounds may also be cleaned, a procedure known as debridement. This involves removing small pieces of burnt skin. This helps the grafted skin to set properly.





How long will I have my gauze dressings?

The first gauze dressings are kept on for 4 or 5 days.

When they're changed for the first time:

- the staples are removed
- the graft is examined to check that the skin has set properly

Then other dressings are applied. These will stay in place for around 3 to 7 days.

Are there precautions to take AFTER the operation?

It's important to:

- keep the dressings clean and dry
- watch for signs of wound infection: temperature of 38.5°C (101.3°F), fluid leaking from the dressing, bad wound odour.

Note that the donor skin may smell bad; this is normal. This is due to the liquid used to preserve it.

When will the autograft be done?

This varies from one case to the next. Your surgeon will plan it with you and can answer your questions.

Are there any medications to take?

Pain levels are assessed by the care team. If needed, pain can be relieved by taking analgesic medication.

If the wound becomes infected, antibiotics are prescribed.

No anti-rejection treatment is required, as the donor skin is left in place for only a few days.

Who can I contact if I have questions?

Ask a member of your care team. Burn unit, 24 hours/day, 7 days/week:

☎ 514 890-8121



USEFUL RESOURCES

Other CHUM health fact sheets are available. Ask your care team which fact sheets can help you.



You can also read them online.

chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante



Questions

The content of this document in no way replaces the advice of your healthcare professional.

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