



CARE INSTRUCTIONS

KAISER PERMANENTE

Melanoma Excision: Before Your Surgery

Your Kaiser Permanente Care Instructions

Excision of a melanoma is a type of surgery to remove, or excise, a melanoma from your skin. Melanoma is a form of skin cancer in which abnormal skin cells grow out of control.

The doctor first gives you medicine to numb the area. Then he or she cuts out the melanoma along with an area of healthy skin around it. How much healthy skin is needed depends on how deep in the skin the melanoma is. Small excisions are usually closed with stitches. A larger excision, or one on the hand or face, may need a skin graft to close the wound. A skin graft is a very thin sheet of healthy skin taken from another part of the body to replace the skin that was removed.

The surgery usually takes up to an hour. You will probably go home soon afterwards. You may have a scar. The scar should fade with time.

If you have a skin graft, the surgery may take longer. You will probably go home 1 to 2 hours later.

You may need other tests and treatments, depending on how large or deep the melanoma is.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

What happens before surgery?

Surgery can be stressful. This information will help you understand what you can expect. And it will help you safely prepare for surgery.

Preparing for surgery

- Understand exactly what surgery is planned, along with the risks, benefits, and other options.
- Tell your doctors ALL the medicines, vitamins, supplements, and herbal remedies you take. Some of these can increase the risk of bleeding or interact with anesthesia.
- If you take blood thinners, such as warfarin (Coumadin), clopidogrel (Plavix), or aspirin, be sure to talk to your doctor. He or she will tell you if you should stop taking these medicines before your surgery. Make sure that you understand exactly what your doctor wants you to do.
- Your doctor will tell you which medicines to take or stop before your surgery. You may need to stop taking certain medicines a week or more before surgery. So talk to your doctor as soon as you can.
- If you have an advance directive, let your doctor know. It may include a living will and a durable power of attorney for health care. Bring a copy to the hospital. If you don't have one, you may want to prepare one. It lets your doctor and loved ones know your health care wishes. Doctors advise that everyone prepare these papers before any type of surgery or procedure.

What happens on the day of surgery?

- Take a bath or shower before you come in for your surgery. Do not apply lotions, perfumes, deodorants, or nail polish.
- Do not shave the surgical site yourself.
- Take off all jewelry and piercings. And take out contact lenses, if you wear them.

Going home

- Be sure you have someone to drive you home. Anesthesia and pain medicine make it unsafe for you to drive.
- You will be given more specific instructions about recovering from your surgery. They will cover things like diet, wound care, follow-up care, driving, and getting back to your normal routine.

When should you call your doctor?

- You have questions or concerns.
- You don't understand how to prepare for your surgery.
- You become ill before the surgery (such as fever, flu, or a cold).
- You need to reschedule or have changed your mind about having the surgery.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <http://www.kp.org>

Enter **X350** in the search box to learn more about "**Melanoma Excision: Before Your Surgery.**"

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