



CARE INSTRUCTIONS

KAISER PERMANENTE

Melanoma Excision: What to Expect at Home

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.

You may have stitches until the surgical wound heals. This may cause a scar that should fade with time. How quickly your wound heals depends on its size. Most wounds take 1 to 3 weeks to heal. If a large area of skin was removed, you may have a skin graft, and healing may take longer.

Some soreness around the site of the wound is normal. Your doctor may recommend an over-the-counter medicine or give you a prescription to help if you have pain.

Your doctor may give you specific instructions on when you can do your normal activities again, such as driving and going back to work.

This care sheet gives you a general idea about how long it will take for you to recover. But each person recovers at a different pace. Follow the steps below to get better as quickly as possible.

How can you care for yourself at home?

Activity

- If you have stitches, check with your doctor about when you can do your normal activities.
- If you have a skin graft, avoid exercise that stretches the skin graft for at least 3 weeks after surgery, unless your doctor gives you other instructions.

Medicines

- Your doctor will tell you if and when you can restart your medicines. He or she will also give you instructions about taking any new medicines.
- 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 and when to start taking those medicines again. Make sure that you understand exactly what your doctor wants you to do.
- Be safe with medicines. Read and follow all instructions on the label.
 - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
 - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.

Wound care

- You will have a dressing over the wound. A dressing helps the wound heal and protects it. Your doctor will tell you how to take care of this.
- If you have stitches, your doctor will tell you when to come back to have them removed.
- If you have a skin graft, your doctor will tell you how to change the bandages and when you don't need them anymore.
- Wash the area daily with warm, soapy water, and pat it dry. Don't use hydrogen peroxide or alcohol. They can slow healing.
- You may shower 24 to 48 hours after surgery. Pat the wound dry. Do not take a bath for the first 2 weeks, or until your doctor tells you it is okay.
- If you have a skin graft, don't rub it for 3 to 4 weeks.

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.

When should you call for help?

Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You passed out (lost consciousness).
- You have severe trouble breathing.
- You have sudden chest pain and shortness of breath, or you cough up blood.

Melanoma Excision: What to Expect at Home (Page 3 of 3)

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have pain that does not get better after you take pain medicine.
- You have loose stitches, or your wound comes open.
- You are bleeding from the wound.
- You have symptoms of infection, such as:
 - Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness.
 - Red streaks leading from the wound.
 - Pus draining from the wound.
 - A fever.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if you have any problems.

Where can you learn more?

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

Enter **S741** in the search box to learn more about "**Melanoma Excision: What to Expect at Home.**"

© 2006-2016 Healthwise, Incorporated. Care instructions adapted under license by Kaiser Permanente. This care instruction is for use with your licensed healthcare professional. If you have questions about a medical condition or this instruction, always ask your healthcare professional. Healthwise, Incorporated disclaims any warranty or liability for your use of this information.