

### Caring for Unhealed Skin

Your child may still have unhealed areas bandaged when you leave the ward.

If there is any ooze or if the bandages get wet:

- Please contact Ward 21 if your child has been placed 'on leave'.
- If your child has been discharged please contact the department where your child's next appointment is (i.e. Plastic Surgery Outpatient Department, Children's Outpatient Department).

The bandages will require changing to reduce the risk of infection and breakdown of the wound.

Avoid activities that may cause injury to the wound and lead to bleeding or infection, e.g. digging in sand, swimming, riding bicycles or contact sports.

### Caring for Healed Skin

Once the skin has healed, it will be fragile and need care and protection. The glands in the skin take time to recover. Massaging moisturising creams into donor sites and grafted areas twice a day will help prevent dryness and itchiness. Massaging helps to break up raised scar tissue and minimises scars.

Creams also keep the scars soft and supple which allows pressure garments to have greater effect and assist in the prevention of contractures, e.g. Vitamin E cream or Aloe Vera cream (unperfumed). These are available from the supermarket, chemist or health shop.

### Pressure Garments

If these are required, the doctor will advise you and the Occupational Therapist (OT) will measure up your child for these and advise you on the wear and care. Pressure garments are to be worn 24 hours a day for up to two years.

### Physiotherapy

If your child has been seeing a physiotherapist while in hospital, you will be advised of the exercises that will need to be continued at home. Daily exercise routine will help stop or minimise contractures and make the skin supple and movements better. The greater the effort put into daily exercises, the better the results will be.

### Medicine

You may need to give your child regular paracetamol for some discomfort and medicine to help with itchiness that may be experienced as the skin is healing.

## Nutrition

Eating good food is important, especially when recovering from a burn. This is because the body needs nutrients and energy from food to help in the healing process. Continue with high protein food and drinks, e.g. meat, eggs, milk, cheese, baked beans, ice cream, yoghurt, etc.

## Hygiene

New skin will be tender when bathing. Gently pat the skin when drying (do not rub vigorously). Pure or unperfumed soap is recommended to prevent the skin from drying out and becoming itchy.

## Itch

Itching is part of the healing process in burns. If your child cannot tell you they are itchy, some signs may be observed; scratching, rubbing, being irritable or squirming their body around.

If you find your child is itching, please ensure that all fingernails are kept short. Your child should wear cotton clothing as a synthetic fabric (e.g. wool or nylon) usually aggravates newly healed skin. Give anti-itch medicine regularly, particularly when settling your child in bed to sleep.

## Sun Care

Avoid the sun. The pigment cells need up to two years to recover and further damage can be caused to the skin. Apply copious amounts of broad spectrum SPF 30+ sunscreen (as recommended by the NZ Cancer Society) to all burn injury areas, if swimming use a water resistant lotion. Protect the new skin by wearing protective clothing, e.g. sunhat, UV swimwear like sunsuits if swimming.

## School or Playgroup

Children are encouraged to return to school or playgroup as soon as possible. This is important, both physically and emotionally. However, there may be some activities they are unable to do if they still have dressings in place, e.g. water play or digging in the sandpit. Talk to your nurse about this and she will give you further advice.



### Follow Up Appointments

Your child may be required to return to the hospital for more dressing changes. If so, please give your child paracetamol and codeine **one hour** prior to the appointment.

**Your follow up appointment is:**

Date: .....

Time: .....

Location:

### Any Concerns

**If your child is 'on leave' contact:**

Ward 21: Phone 364 0640, Ext 89210

**If your child has been discharged contact the  
department where their next outpatient  
appointment is:**

Plastic Surgery Outpatient Department  
3rd Floor Parkside  
Phone 364 0741

or

Children's Outpatients Department  
Phone 364 0732

