Taking Care of Your Donor Sites

A donor site is an area of your body where skin was taken to use for your skin graft. Special bandages are used to prevent infection and help donor sites heal quickly. There are four different types of bandages. Their names are Duoderm®, Fine Mesh Gauze, Biobrane®, and Mepilex Ag®. There are different instructions for each kind of bandage.

Caring for donor sites with Duoderm®

What is Duoderm®?
Duoderm® is a soft brown bandage that is put on a donor site for 7 to 10 days.

How do I care for it?
Duoderm should stay in place. You may bathe with Duoderm in place. After taking a bath or a shower, pat the Duoderm dry with a clean towel. Do not try to wash under the bandage or remove the drainage. This drainage helps the donor site to heal. If there is a small amount of drainage leaking from the under the Duoderm®, patch it with another piece of Duoderm®. If there is a large amount of drainage, you may need to change the Duoderm® as your nurse showed you.

On the ninth day after surgery, if ordered by the doctor, take the Duoderm® off. Gently wash the donor site using a clean wash cloth and mild soap (for example Dove® or Ivory®). The donor site will look pink and dry. A new bandage is not needed. If the donor site becomes itchy and dry, use a small amount of lotion for relief.

Caring for donor sites with Fine Mesh Gauze or Biobrane®

What is Fine Mesh Gauze or Biobrane®?
Fine mesh gauze and Biobrane® are bandages used to keep the donor site dry and protect it from infections. After a skin graft operation, the fine mesh gauze or Biobrane® bandage will look wet and may have drainage leaking from it. After a few days this leaking will stop and the bandage will look dry.
How do I care for them?
Fine Mesh Gauze or Biobrane stays in place until it dries out and falls off. As the donor site heals, this bandage will loosen and lift away from the skin. As this happens, carefully trim the loose edges with scissors. After the bandage has been trimmed, use a small amount of moisturizer on the healed pink skin two or three times a day. Do not pull, pick, or force the dressing off. This may cause pain and bleeding.

You may take a shower or a bath and allow the Fine Mesh Gauze or Biobrane bandage to get wet.

Caring for donor sites with Mepilex Ag®

What is Mepilex Ag?
Mepilex Ag is a soft foam pad with a silicone layer used to cover your donor site. The foam pad absorbs drainage from the donor site and easily shapes to your body. Mepilex Ag does not stick to the donor site. It needs another bandage (like an ACE bandage, Coban, Spandage, or Tubigrip) to keep it in place.

How do I care for it?
A Mepilex Ag bandage can stay in place for up to 7 days, but it may need to be changed every day right after surgery. If your bandage is leaking or comes off, it needs to be changed. First, you or your nurse will remove the outer bandage and then the Mepilex Ag bandage. To remove the Mepilex Ag bandage gently lift a corner and peel it off. Clean the donor site with soap and water, and gently pat it dry with gauze or a dry cloth. Place a new Mepilex Ag bandage over the donor site (sticky side down). For the best results, the bandage should overlap on healthy skin. Put the outer bandage back on to keep the Mepilex Ag in place.

Take care to keep your Mepilex Ag bandage dry. When you take a shower or bath, the area with the Mepilex Ag must be covered with a waterproof dressing or bag. Even with a waterproof covering, do not submerge your Mepilex dressing in water.
When should I call the doctor?

Sometimes donor sites do not heal as quickly as we would like. Call the Burn Center or Clinic anytime you are worried about your donor site, or if you have

- more drainage or more pain than before
- an area around the donor site that is red, swollen, or painful to touch
- a donor site color that changes from pink or red to tan, brown, or black
- a donor site with a bad smell
- a fever

If you have questions, please call the Burn Center (212) 746-0328 or the Burn Clinic (212) 746-5024.

This information is brief and general. It should not be the only source of your information on this health care topic. It is not to be used or relied on for diagnosis or treatment. It does not take the place of instructions from your doctor. Talk to your health care providers before making a health care decision.

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