

Dermatology Consultants at Newton-Wellesley, PC

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CURETTAGE AND ELECTRODESSICATION WOUND CARE INSTRUCTIONS

General information: Curettage and electrodesiccation removes skin cancers or other lesions from the top portion of the skin. A scraping tool is used to scrape down to normal skin and an electric cautery tool is used to stop the bleeding. This is repeated 2 or 3 times to destroy a small amount of surrounding normal skin to provide a safety margin around the cancer.

What to expect: Treated areas are injected with an anesthetic, followed by the scraping and cautery. An antibiotic ointment and a dressing is applied, which is generally a bandaid or gauze and tape. A scab forms, which then heals from below and from the sides over the course of several weeks depending on the size of the destroyed lesion.

Wound care: The treated area will heal more quickly and will be less itchy if an ointment such as Vaseline petroleum jelly (or Aquaphor, both are available over the counter) is used to keep it moist and greasy. Antibiotic ointments such as Bacitracin or Neosporin can also be used, but can sometimes cause an allergic reaction, and are not necessary unless the area becomes dirty. Band-aids may be needed to protect the scab from rubbing, but are not always necessary. It is a myth that the scab will heal best if you “let the air get at it” to form a dry scab.

Bleeding: Bleeding can occur, especially if the scab is traumatized. If you notice active bleeding, remove the dressing and applying steady pressure with a washcloth or gauze for 15-20 minutes. If the oozing does not stop after this maneuver, repeat for another 15-20 minutes. If still bleeding, please call the office, 617-969-0210. If the office is closed, the answering service will contact the covering physician.

Discomfort: You may have a small amount of tenderness or discomfort. Tylenol is the preferred painkiller because will not increase the risk of bleeding.

Infection: Signs of infection include increasing pain, redness, swelling, tenderness and pus. This usually develops approximately a week after the procedure. If you think you may have an infection, please call the office, 617-969-0210.

Scarring and color change: Treated areas generally heal with a flat round permanent scar. The skin just round the scar can sometimes heal with either lighter or darker discoloration which generally resolves slowly over months.