



SKIN | CANCER | FOCUS

What is a Skin Graft?

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A skin graft is a surgical procedure in which a piece of skin is removed from one area of your body (donor site) and transplanted to another area (recipient site) where skin has been damaged, lost, or removed. This can be due to injuries, burns, chronic wounds, or after removal of skin cancers.

Types of Skin Grafts

1. **Split-thickness graft** – only the top layers of skin are taken. Often used for large areas.
2. **Full-thickness graft** – includes all layers of skin. Usually used for smaller, more visible areas.

Why a Skin Graft is Done

- To cover a wound that cannot heal naturally
- To improve appearance and function of the affected area
- To prevent infection
- To help the wound heal faster

Before the Procedure

- You may be asked to stop certain medications like blood thinners
- Avoid smoking as it can reduce healing
- You may need blood tests or other checks depending on your health
- The donor site will be discussed, usually an area that can be easily hidden

During the Procedure

- Usually done under local or general anaesthesia
- The surgeon removes a piece of skin from the donor site
- The graft is placed on the wound and secured with stitches, staples, or special dressings
- The area is covered with a protective dressing

After the Procedure

- Keep the graft site clean and dry as instructed
- Avoid putting pressure on the graft
- You may feel pain or discomfort, which can be managed with pain relief
- Dressings are usually changed by your healthcare provider
- The donor site may take 1–2 weeks to heal

Risks and Complications

- Infection
- Bleeding
- Graft not fully “taking” or failing
- Scarring at donor or recipient sites
- Colour or texture differences

Recovery

- Healing time depends on the size and location of the graft
- Gentle activity is encouraged, but avoid strenuous activity that may damage the graft
- Follow-up appointments are important to check graft healing

When to Seek Medical Advice

- Signs of infection (redness, swelling, pus, increasing pain)
- Graft becoming loose or falling off
- Fever or feeling unwell

Important Notes

- A skin graft may not look exactly like the surrounding skin
- Full function and appearance may improve over months
- Scarring is expected, but usually fades over time