Curettage and Cautery or Driclor

Patient Information

The Prosser White Dermatology Centre
Leigh Infirmary
**Curettage**
Curettage is a procedure in which the dermatology doctor/nurse scrapes off a skin lesion using a sharp blade called a curette.

Cautery is the method that is used to stop the bleeding and seal the wound.

**What does it involve?**
The doctor/nurse will explain to you why your skin lesion needs treatment and the procedure involved.

The person performing the procedure will inject some local anaesthetic into the area surrounding the lesion to be treated (this causes a tingling discomfort which will last only a few moments). This will make the skin go numb so no pain should be felt during the procedure. You may feel a pushing sensation but this should not be painful.

The skin lesion is then scraped off with a sharp ring blade (curette).

Bleeding is then stopped with either cautery or driclor.

**Benefits**
To enable diagnoses and removal of skin lesion, with minimal scarring.

**Alternatives**
There are no alternatives.

**What happens to the lesion after it is removed?**
The lesion will be sent to a pathology laboratory for analysis unless you are told otherwise.

**Risks**
- **Scarring** – It is impossible to cut or curette the skin without scarring in some way. However, certain individuals sometimes have an abnormal response to the skin healing and as a result may get larger, raised scars than usual. This is known as keloid or hypertrophic scarring. The risk is higher on the shoulders, upper back and chest, or if you have a family history of such scars. This can be treated but the thickening may be permanent.

  Scars from curettage are usually flat and/or slightly depressed and white, they are a similar size and shape to that of the original skin lesion. The doctor/nurse performing the procedure will however, endeavour to keep scarring to a minimum.

- **Infection** – as with any procedure, there is a small risk of infection, the risks of which will be explained to you before and after surgery, and what to do if the wound becomes infected (read after care following surgery at the end of the this leaflet).
Bleeding/Cautery – As with any surgery you cannot cut the skin without any bleeding. Bleeding is usually stopped by cautery of which there are two methods:

- The use of a hot point (Diathermy) to seal the blood vessels and stop bleeding. **Please inform the doctor if you have a pacemaker fitted as Diathermy can interfere with its performance.**

- The use of a chemical called Driclor (Aluminium Chloride Hexahydrate) which stops bleeding by coagulating the blood and sealing the small vessels.

**After care following surgery**

Your wound may be tender one to two hours after curettage when the local anaesthetic wears off. Paracetamol (two tablets) can be taken every four to six hours as required (a maximum of eight tablets in 24 hours).

- If you have a dressing applied you will be told when to take this off.
- Once the dressing has been removed you can apply Vaseline twice daily over the wound area until it heals.
- If there is any bleeding do not remove the original dressing, press on the wound firmly with another dressing without looking at it for 10 to15 minutes. If it is still bleeding after this time, seek medical attention.
- Try to keep the wound dry for 24 hours. You can then gently wash and dry the wound.
- If the wound becomes red or very painful, consult your GP or practice nurse. There are no stitches to remove after curettage.
- The wound from curettage will take approximately two to three weeks to heal over. The scar will initially be red and raised but usually reduces in colour and size over several months.

If at anytime you are worried, please speak to a member of staff, who will try to answer any questions you may have or telephone the Dermatology Unit 01942 264748.
Comments, Compliments or Complaints

The Patient Relations/Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends and carers.

Contact Us

Tel: 01942 822376 (Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm)

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Ask 3 Questions

Become more involved in decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment. To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, Braille and other languages upon request. For more information call 01942 773106.

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