

# BERNSTEIN MEDICAL

---

110 East 55<sup>th</sup> Street, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor, New York, NY 10022 212-826-2400

## Instructions After Your Follicular Unit Transplant

**Please Note:** These instructions have been carefully prepared by your physician. If you have any questions after your procedure, the first thing to do is to review this information. The transplanted and sutured areas must be treated differently. Please review the following sections again.

**If you are having a medical emergency:**

**Call 911 and/or go to the nearest hospital emergency room.**

For general, non-urgent post-op questions, please contact our staff at [contact@bernsteinmedical.com](mailto:contact@bernsteinmedical.com)

### 1. Care of Transplanted Area

At the time of surgery, your scalp was thoroughly cleaned of blood and crusts, but these will tend to re-form soon after your procedure. Care should be taken while cleaning the transplanted site during the 10 days following surgery, because it is during this period that the healing mechanisms of your body secure the grafts firmly in place. However, appropriate care of the recipient area will minimize crusting and make the transplant less noticeable and the healing more rapid.

When you arrive home (or your hotel) after your procedure, remove your bandana and surgeon's cap, but not the headband. Please stay in bed and rest for the remainder of the day/evening as the medications given to you during your procedure will make you tired.

The morning following surgery, remove your bandage and shower with comfortably warm water.

Allow the shower water to flow gently over the transplant area. You may partially block the flow of the water with your hand so that the scalp is not subject to strong, direct pressure. Lift up the hair in the back of your scalp so that water may irrigate the sutured areas as well.

Place a small amount of the shampoo that we have provided to you, on the sponge that we have given you or on your finger pads, and gently apply the shampoo to the recipient area with a patting or rolling motion. Do not rub. As soon as the shampoo has been applied to the entire transplanted area, rinse the shampoo off with indirect running water. You may use the rinsed sponge or your finger pads to assist in removing the shampoo, but be careful that you pat the area and do not rub. Stop soaking your head as soon as the shampoo is rinsed off. It is not necessary to remove all of the crusting during the first shower. Perform the showering and gentle shampooing three separate times the day following surgery (i.e., morning, noon and night).

On the second day after the procedure, shower and shampoo twice daily and continue this regime for 7 days. If the scalp becomes too dry, you should switch to Baby Shampoo on the fourth day and continue showering using only the Baby Shampoo for the remainder of the 10 days. Resume your normal shampoo after 10 days and/or when the shampoo we have provided you with runs out.

If the grafts are soaked too long, they may swell and rise above the skin surface and appear as little white bumps immediately after showering. This is a problem more likely encountered the first few days after the procedure. It is not harmful to grafts, but indicates that you are soaking too much. As soon as you allow your scalp to dry, they will disappear.

**It is important when shampooing, or rinsing the transplanted area, that you are gentle for the first 10 days following surgery. DO NOT RUB, PICK, OR SCRATCH, as this may dislodge grafts.**

From one to four weeks post-op you can expect that some transplanted hair will begin to shed. This is a normal process and should not be a concern. The healthy hair follicles are firmly in place at TEN days post-op and cannot be dislodged. If there is still any residual crusting at this time, you may scrub it off in the shower. First, soften the crusts by soaking them in the shower under direct running water and then, using regular shampoo, scrub them all off. If this is not done, the crusts will eventually fall off naturally as the hairs are shed.

**Please note that when hairs are shed, there may be a crust at the top and a bulb at the bottom. Remember the bulb is not the root (the growth part of the hair follicle). It is normal for the hair, bulb and associated crust to be shed and this does not represent a lost graft. If a graft is actually lost (something that may occur the first few days following the procedure) there will be bleeding at the site of the lost graft. Therefore, if you don't see any bleeding, don't be concerned.**

Do not use tar shampoo (a dark-colored, medicated shampoo used for psoriasis) on the transplanted area for 10 days following your procedure, as this may interfere with the growth of the grafts.

## **2. Care of Sutured or Stapled Area (and non-transplanted parts of scalp)**

Gently wash the donor (sutured) area with your hand using the shampoo we have provided to you. The shower water may hit the sutured area in the back of your scalp directly. If this is uncomfortable for you, turn down the water pressure or partially block the water with your hand.

The purpose is to soak off the crusts from the suture line so that it will heal well, and to remove crusting from the hair in the non-transplanted area. This may take 15 minutes or more in the shower. You will not hurt the sutured area by using directly running water or by rubbing or washing the area gently.

After the shower, pat the area dry. Apply a thin layer of petrolatum jelly (Vaseline) to LIGHTLY cover the entire suture/staple line. You should reapply sparingly throughout the day if the area feels like it is drying out. You should continue applying the jelly until the staples or sutures are removed. It is not necessary to use jelly after that, but you may do so for a few days if there is any residual crusting.

If at any time there is bleeding in either area, do not be concerned. Apply direct pressure with a dry, clean cloth until the bleeding stops. This may take several minutes in the transplanted area and up to 20 minutes in the sutured area. If you have any concerns or questions, please contact us.

When staples are used, there is often slightly more bleeding in the donor area than with sutures. This is expected and should not be a cause for concern. If you have staples, the night of surgery please place a towel over your pillow to keep it clean. Bleeding can be controlled with direct pressure using a dry, clean cloth.

You may dry your hair with a warm (NOT HOT) hair dryer. Hair spray should NOT be used for the first week.

## **3. Medications You May Need**

**Sleeping Medication:** You have been given Valium 5mg (generically known as diazepam) or Xanax 0.5mg (alprazolam) tablets to help you sleep. If the pills are too strong and you are very tired the next day, you can break the tablets in half. If they are not making you sleepy, you may take up to two at bedtime.

The most important medication to use when trying to sleep is the pain medication; be certain that the pain is under control before using any additional sleeping medication, as the additional pill will often not be necessary. DO NOT DRIVE under the influence of Valium or Xanax. DO NOT DRINK ALCOHOL WHILE TAKING ANY MEDICATIONS GIVEN TO YOU FOR SLEEP, PAIN or HICCUPS.

**Pain Pills:** You have been given Vicodin (generically known as Hydrocodone) for pain. Take 1 tablet every 4 hours as needed for the first 72 hours. After 3 days, you may take Aleve, Extra Strength Tylenol, Aspirin, Motrin, Naprosyn or Advil, during the day and save the Vicodin for bedtime. Vicodin may cause drowsiness, therefore driving under the influence of Vicodin is not recommended.

**Cortisone:** You have been given oral cortisone to minimize swelling after the hair transplant. This medication should not be taken by diabetics. A rare complication of degeneration (aseptic necrosis) of the hip joint from taking corticosteroids has been reported.

**Hiccups:** Do not drink carbonated beverages (such as beer, Coke, Pepsi, or any other soda) the day of and the day following your procedure, as this increases the occurrence of hiccups during the recovery period. If hiccups occur and do not resolve quickly, call the doctor with the phone number of a local pharmacy so that he may prescribe Chlorpromazine 25mg (Thorazine). Take two Chlorpromazine when you get the medication and then one tablet every four hours until the hiccups stop. DO NOT TAKE VALIUM AT THE SAME TIME AS THE THORAZINE AND DO NOT DRIVE, AS IT MAY MAKE YOU SLEEPY.

**Itching:** You may experience some itching either in the transplanted area or in the sutured area following your procedure. In general, itching is part of the healing process and should not be a cause for concern. A common contributing factor may be dryness. You may also experience itching as the new hairs grow in. If the itching is bothersome to you, purchase Hydrocortisone Ointment 1% in 30 gram tubes which may be bought over the counter (it must be in Ointment form, not a cream). This may be applied locally to the areas that itch, as needed, up to four times a day. It is also possible that you may be using too much shampoo or shampooing too long which can dry the scalp. If you feel that this is a factor, please cut back on the shampooing. DO NOT SCRATCH THE SCALP as this may dislodge grafts.

**Infection:** Small pustules, yellow crusts and/or significant redness in the donor or recipient area may be early signs of infection. If you notice any of these symptoms please contact the office as they may require treatment with antibiotics.

**Minoxidil (Rogaine):** Rogaine may cause severe irritation to the scalp. If this occurs after a hair transplant, it can interfere with hair growth. If you choose to use Rogaine after your procedure, you should wait a minimum of one week after surgery. If any sign of redness, irritation, itching, or burning occurs, stop the medication and call our office.

#### **4. Other Post-op Issues**

##### **Swelling**

If there is significant swelling, it usually occurs around the 2nd to the 5th day post-op. The swelling usually begins at the hairline and then, from gravity, it gradually moves down the forehead and settles into the bridge of the nose and around the eyes. Occasionally, it may cause the eyelids to swell shut for a short period of time. Sometimes the swelling is extreme, but it always resolves by itself after a few days and does not require any special treatment. It should not be a cause for concern.

If you would like, you may place cool compresses over the area that is swollen, as long as it is not placed over the implants. Sleep with your head raised at a 45-degree angle for the first 3 nights after the procedure; this may help

to prevent swelling. You may use a recliner chair or 3-4 pillows. If the swelling is associated with redness, pain, tenderness, fever or chills, it may indicate an infection. If any of these symptoms occur, please call our office.

### **Bleeding**

Before you leave the office, all bleeding will be controlled. Rarely, some bleeding may occur after the procedure. If bleeding occurs, put firm, continuous pressure on the area. We suggest using a rolled up, clean towel and lying your head on top of it. **APPLY CONTINUOUS PRESSURE FOR A FULL 20 MINUTES.** If the bleeding does not stop, call us at the above numbers and follow the directions given. **If you are unable to reach us, then go to the nearest Emergency Room and show these instructions to the physician on duty.**

### **Lost or Dislodged Grafts**

It is not uncommon to lose a few grafts after the procedure. Do not be concerned, this is expected. If a graft falls out, but does not bleed, the growth part of the follicle was not lost and so this should not be of any concern.

### **Activities, Alcohol and Other Restrictions**

The day after your hair transplantation, take it easy. You will be tired from the sedatives given the day of your surgery. If possible, spend this day at home, or in a comfortable place, and concentrate on showering properly and following the post-op instructions.

You may perform your normal daily activities for the next three days and moderate exercise for the next 14 days. After two weeks, you may resume your normal daily activities. Avoid direct trauma to the head for two weeks after the procedure. Abstain from sexual intercourse and alcohol for THREE days following the procedure.

### **Exercise**

The main concern with exercise is the suture line in the donor area. Straining or stretching the back of the neck may predispose to a wider scar and should be avoided. Exercises that do not stretch or flex the neck, or put pressure, on the back of the neck are usually OK. In general, exercises such as sit-ups (especially with your hands clasped behind your head), squats or bench presses will strain the back of the neck and should be avoided for at least 1-3 months post-op. If the back of the scalp feels tight after 4 weeks, or if you have a tendency to heal with wide scars, these activities should be avoided for 3-6 months.

Exercises such as walking up an incline, lifting very light weights and isolated leg exercises may be started within a few days after your procedure. You may wade in the water 10 days after your procedure, but aggressive swimming should be postponed for 1 month after your procedure. Since the impact of exercise will vary greatly from person to person, "cookbook" recommendations are not possible. Remember, the donor wound will not regain its strength for at least 6 months after the surgery, so some reasonable degree of caution should be exercised during this period. You must use your own good judgment in each particular case and contact us if you have questions.

### **Smoking**

Smoking causes constriction of blood vessels and decreased blood flow to the scalp, predominantly due to its nicotine content. The carbon monoxide in smoke decreases the oxygen carrying capacity of the blood. These factors may contribute to poor wound healing after a hair transplant and can increase the chance of a wound infection and scarring. Smoking may also contribute to poor hair growth.

The deleterious effects of smoking wear off slowly when one abstains, particularly in chronic smokers, so that smoking puts one at risk to poor healing even after smoking is stopped for weeks or even months. Although it is not known exactly how long one should avoid smoking before and after a hair transplant a common recommendation is to abstain from 1 week prior to surgery to 2 weeks after the procedure.

### **Sun**

Please avoid unprotected exposure to sunlight for one month. Wear a hat when you are going to be outside. After 10 days you may use a strong sunscreen with a SPF of 30+. Do not get sunburns or excessive sun on an unprotected scalp any time. This is good policy for everyone, not just those who have had a hair transplant.

### **Infection**

Redness, swelling, and slight tenderness are to be expected for the first few days after a procedure. If the redness, swelling, or tenderness increases after the second day, call us. Rarely, one or more grafts may become infected. They present as white pustules (pus pimples) or redness around individual hairs. They may be associated with a yellow colored crust and may be tender. If this should occur, please contact our office. It may require antibiotic treatment.

Virtually everyone will develop a few pimples in the recipient area starting at about a month following surgery and continuing for several months. These are new hairs breaking through the skin. They occasionally can be confused with a true infection, but pimples tend to resolve on their own in 3-4 days. As individual pimples resolve, new ones may crop up. They generally do not require treatment. Larger pimples can be unroofed by removing the thin top layer of skin with a sterile needle, and then any fluid can drain. If more than just a few develop at one time, or the skin in a larger area becomes swollen, red, tender and hot, then you should call us as antibiotics or drainage by the doctor may be necessary.

Ingrown hairs may cause a cyst to develop in the area of a graft. They can develop over a graft that was placed several months earlier. Cysts present as local swelling and redness, with or without tenderness. We can treat these easily in the office.

If the sutured area becomes infected, swelling, pain, or tenderness may be present in this area. Fever and/or chills are also indications of infection as well. There also may be a discharge or pus in the suture line. If any of these conditions should occur, please contact the office.

### **Numbness**

Numbness, tingling or similar sensations may occur temporarily on your scalp. These are the results of cutting small nerve endings in the skin during the course of harvesting the donor grafts and creating the recipient sites. This generally disappears within a few months, as nerve endings re-grow.

### **Hair Coloring and Cosmetics**

Do not dye your hair for 4 weeks following the procedure. Do not use cosmetic camouflage agents (such as Toppik) for at least 7 days following your procedure. When applying the cosmetic camouflage agents, or washing them out, be very gentle through day 8 through day 10 (at which time the grafts are permanent).

## **5. Follow-up Visits and Suture Removal**

There are three types of sutures that may be used in the donor area during your procedure, staples, non-absorbable sutures and absorbable sutures. The staples and non-absorbable sutures must be removed. During your procedure your doctor used the following sutures:

\_\_\_\_\_ **Staples** The staples in the donor area must be removed. They are generally removed one to three weeks after the procedure. They usually are removed in stages over two sessions. If you do not have these staples removed, scarring may occur. Please shower the morning your staples are to be removed but DO NOT apply ointment to the donor area that morning. This makes it easier for the staples to be removed.

\_\_\_\_\_ Your appointment has been made at BMPC for staple removal on \_\_\_\_\_  
and on \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_ You should have your staples removed by the physician of your choice in \_\_\_\_\_ days and \_\_\_\_\_ days following your procedure.

\_\_\_\_ **Non-Absorbable Sutures** The sutures in the donor area must be removed. They are generally removed from 10 to 14 days after the procedure. If you do not have these sutures removed, scarring may occur.

\_\_\_\_ Your appointment has been made at BMPC for suture removal on \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ You should have your sutures removed by the physician of your choice in \_\_\_\_\_ days.

\_\_\_\_ **Absorbable Sutures** These sutures will dissolve on their own. Do not pull on them. The knots at the ends may occasionally persist more than weeks. After 2 weeks, you may cut off the knots at home using fine scissors (if the knots are bothering you). It is also perfectly fine to let the knots fall off on their own.

\_\_\_\_ A follow-up appointment has been made at BMPC on \_\_\_\_\_

### **A Note to the Emergency Room Physician**

**If this patient needs emergency treatment, please do the following until a Bernstein Medical physician can be reached. Remove the dressing carefully. The bleeding virtually always occurs in the donor (occipital area). If direct pressure fails to stop the bleeding, sutures may be used to effectively control any specific bleeding point. Please instruct the patient to contact Bernstein Medical as soon as possible so that follow-up arrangements can be made.**