

TATTOO EXCISION

Background

Tattoos are becoming more common-place worldwide. However, there is also a rise in the number of people wanting to have them removed. This can be achieved using either surgical excision or laser therapy.

Tattoo excision - the procedure

This refers simply to the surgical removal (cutting out) of a tattoo on the skin. The resultant wound is usually then put back together with stitches. Sometimes, several planned procedures are required and of course, Mr Banwell will give expert advice and inform you whether surgery is actually possible for your tattoo removal.

What does it involve?

The procedure is usually performed under local anaesthetic in outpatients but sometimes a general anaesthetic may be necessary. This is a quick and simple procedure with a short recovery period. However, some tattoos require serial excision (ie. sequential removal of tattoos in stages) as they may be more extensive.

How long does the surgery take?

The operation itself may take between 30 - 60 minutes, depending upon the size of tattoo being removed. You will be in the operating theatre for slightly longer than this to prepare for surgery and have the injection of the local anaesthetic.

Complications of surgery?

Unfortunately complications can occur following any surgery and patients need to be fully aware of this. Mr Banwell does his utmost to minimize the complication rate and likes to practise in a safe manner. The commonest complications include scarring, adverse scarring, bleeding, haematoma, infection, wound problems, delayed healing, numbness and damage to nerves and vessels.

After surgery?

After the surgery the wound will be dressed with brown surgical tape (micropore). This can get wet (showering or washing) but you should not soak in the bath. You will be able to shower the day after surgery, after which you can pat the tape dry with a towel then use a hairdryer on a warm setting; it is important to ensure the tape is fully dried. This will stay in place until after your stitches are removed and the wound will usually be re-taped for a further week or so. Mr Banwell may give you antibiotics in some instances.

Recovery?

You will be able to return to work/normal activities the following day, but it is important to take things easy and avoid strenuous activity for a minimum of 2-weeks. Stitches are usually removed between 1- and 2-weeks after the surgery. If your lump was shaved off then you will just leave the dressing to fall off in time.

You will be able to drive the following day if you are careful. If the operation was on your face or head, it is important not to bend down or lift things for a week or two after the operation.

Success and satisfaction?

This is a safe, reliable and simple procedure with a low complication rate but it may take some time to remove larger tattoos. Mr Banwell will advise of the best treatment plan.

Important Notice

Mr Banwell strongly advises you stop smoking prior to surgery as this can affect the outcome of surgery and increase complication rates. Nutritional supplements, anticoagulant medication and blood thinners (eg. aspirin and brufen) all increase the risk of bleeding and should be stopped prior to surgery unless otherwise instructed.

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NOTES & QUESTIONS

AT A GLANCE

SURGERY TIME

30-60 minutes

HOSPITAL STAY

Outpatient procedure (sometimes day case main theatre)

ANAESTHETIC ASSESSMENT

No

PRE ADMISSION TESTS

No

SLEEPING POSITION

Sleeping with pillows for 1 week

REASONABLY MOBILE

1 day

WASHING

Can shower immediately

DRIVING

Following day

EXERCISE INCLUDING GYM

2 weeks off minimum

TIME OFF WORK

1 day