



# Dr Franz F Birkholtz

MBCHB (Pret) MMED

**Plastic & Reconstructive Surgeon**

PR NR: 0360000056537 | MP NR: 0403156

## GENERAL POST OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS AND INFORMED CONSENT

Informed consent for: .....

Patient's name: .....

I authorize dr ..... the "Doctor" (and his assistants) to perform the abovementioned operation on me, or my .....

The nature and effect of the operation, the risks and complications involved, as well as alternate methods of treatment have been fully explained to me by the Doctor and I understand them. The following points among others, have been specifically made clear:

- Scars result from this operation. Every effort will be made to conceal or to make them as inconspicuous as possible.
- There may be swelling that may persist for several weeks.
- There may be discoloration (black and blue marks) that may persist for several weeks.
- There may be scattered areas of numbness over the area following the surgery that may persist for an indefinite period of time.
- No guarantee has been made regarding the amount of percentage of improvement in terms of apparent age or the permanency of the results.
- At times fluid of blood may accumulate in the operative sites and these may require aspiration or drainage. This is especially prevalent in patients that smokes, using anticoagulants, vitamins or herbal products. Extra costs are involved if this drainage is to be performed in theatre.
- There may be hair loss bilaterally.
- There is a possibility of injury to the nerves that could result in temporary or permanent weakness of some of the facial muscles.
- Part of the undermined skin could be lost which could result in wide scars or necessitate a skin graft. This is especially prevalent in smokers.
- Infection is possible in any type of surgery.



Tel: 012 346 0109  
Fax: 086 519 5641  
reception@ffbirkholtz.co.za  
accounts@ffbirkholtz.co.za  
www.ffbirkholtz.co.za  
VAT Nr: 4720204397

✉ 161 Groenkloof, 0027

📍 17 George Storrar Dr,  
Groenkloof, Pretoria  
GPS: -25.771545, 28.210480

I authorize the Doctor to perform any other procedure that he may deem desirable in attempting to improve the condition stated in Paragraph 1 or any unhealthy or unforeseen condition that may be encountered during the operation.

I consent to the administration of general anaesthesia under the direction of the physician responsible for this service.

I recognize that when general anaesthesia is used, it presents additional risks over which the above doctors have no control, and I agree to discuss the risks of general anaesthesia with the Anaesthesiologist before surgery is performed.

I understand that the practice of medicine and surgery is not an exact science and that reputable practitioners cannot guarantee results. No guarantee or assurance has been given by the Doctor or anyone else as to the results that may be obtained.

I understand that the two sides of the human body are not the same and can never be made the same.

I give permission to the doctor to take still or motion clinical photographs with the understanding that such photographs remain the property of the practice.

I am not known to be allergic to anything except: (list)

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

I certify that I have read the above authorization, that the explanations referred to therein were made to my satisfaction, and that I fully understand such explanations and the above authorization.

Signed ..... Date .....

(Patient or person authorized to consent for patient)

Witness ..... Date .....



Tel: 012 346 0109  
Fax: 086 519 5641  
reception@ffbirkholtz.co.za  
accounts@ffbirkholtz.co.za  
www.ffbirkholtz.co.za  
VAT Nr: 4720204397

✉ 161 Groenkloof, 0027  
📍 17 George Storrar Dr,  
Groenkloof, Pretoria  
GPS: -25.771545, 28.210480

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 1. Will I have any pain after the surgery?

It is important that you take your pain medication regularly as prescribed. Often combinations of medications are prescribed to work synergistically. Do not alter your dosage schedules, as this could be dangerous. If you have persistent pain after taking your medication correctly, you must notify us about this, without delay. A Few pillows under your knees while lying on your back will help to ease the pressure on your abdominal sutures. Contact telephone number 012 346 0109 or 082 576 1170 all hours.

### 2. What about bleeding?

It is normal for some bleeding to occur after any surgery. Often local anaesthetic solution with added Adrenaline is used during surgery, for pain control as well as to limit intra-operative bleeding. After 2 or so hours, when the local anaesthetic wears off, a renewed bleeding can occur. This should last only for about 12 hours. In patients with bleeding tendencies or patients taking medication which contain aspirin and other NSAIMS, prolonged bleeding can be expected. This might be bothersome for up to 3 days. Seldom is the bleeding so extensive that further medical care is required. If you are concerned, please notify the rooms about your bleeding. Bleeding that does require immediate attention is active bleeding (more than half a cup) associated with pain, progressive swelling and throbbing. Notify the rooms immediately if this happens.

### 3. Will I have a drain after the surgery?

During your stay in hospital you were shown to empty out and measure your drainage. Your drain stays in for an average period of 6 days, or until it drains less than 30-40cc/24h. If fluid leaks past the drain pipe onto your clothes, the drain pipe is most likely blocked by a clot. You may see a wormlike clot in the pipe. It must be removed and you should please notify your doctor to manage this. Your doctor will decide if your drain can be removed at you first post-operative visit. When your drain is removed, the small exit hole will close spontaneously over 1 – 2 weeks. Initially some fluid / blood can still drain from the exit hole. This seldom lasts longer than 3 days. If any fluids build up after removal of your drain pipes, you will have to visit your doctor for needle aspiration of this excessive fluid. A few visits weekly may be necessary until the fluid excess stops. Very seldom is it necessary to reinsert another drain pipe for a further period. The most common problem patients encounter is accidental removal of their drains, before these are ready to be removed. Drain pipes or reservoirs get stuck in clothing or bed linen. Expect some fluid build up then. This is not too serious a complication.

### 4. How do I take care of my wounds after surgery?

Before discharge from hospital your dressings will be checked. If necessary they will be replaced before going home. If your dressings remain clean, dry and not soaked with blood, it is best to keep them on for at least 5 – 6 days. This allows the wound edges to seal off before contamination takes place. Thereafter wounds can be cleaned twice daily using tap water and normal soap. Be sure to dry off your wounds thoroughly after cleaning, using a hair dryer on a cool setting. It is not advised to rigorously clean your wounds with Savlon™, Dettol™, or other poison, as this may be toxic to your healing cells in the wounds. It is advisable to use topical antibiotic ointment, Bactroban™, on your wounds, twice daily, after opening the dressings. If your wounds become hot, painful and swollen, with or without a pussy discharge, this could mean an infected wound which warrants antibiotics and an evaluation by your doctor. He can also request a wound care nurse to manage your wound during this period.

A variety of suture materials is available for wound closure. Some materials are dissolvable while others are not. The latter will need removal after a period of days to weeks, depending on the location of the wound. There are various different kinds of dissolvable suture materials. The time to dissolve varies between products. Some materials dissolve within a week or so.



Tel: 012 346 0109  
 Fax: 086 519 5641  
 reception@ffbirkholtz.co.za  
 accounts@ffbirkholtz.co.za  
 www.ffbirkholtz.co.za  
 VAT Nr: 4720204397

✉ 161 Groenkloof, 0027

📍 17 George Storrar Dr,  
 Groenkloof, Pretoria  
 GPS: -25.771545, 28.210480

Others may take longer than 2 years to dissolve. The mechanism by which the materials dissolve also varies. Often this dissolving process is accompanied by an inflammatory response within the tissue. This may cause a generalized redness within the wound. Here your doctor will evaluate to differentiate this redness from infection. However in some patients this inflammatory process leads to small suture abscesses. This can be painful and may need surgical removal. This can be done in your doctor's consulting rooms. Unfortunately this could lead to widened and more conspicuous scarring. Even today the ideal dissolving suture material, free from adverse reactions, does not exist.

### **5. Will I have to take any antibiotics?**

Antibiotics are prescribed with certain types of surgery/wounds. This course of antibiotics is aimed at preventing wound infections, especially in traumatized tissue. Usually a broad spectrum antibiotic is prescribed, taking your allergic profile into consideration. The duration of this course is for 5 days, sometimes more. It is very important that this course is completed, to prevent organisms forming a resistance to the antibiotics. Unfortunately antibiotics have side effects too. These include diarrhoea, abdominal cramps, female tract fungal infections and skin rashes. To limit this, your doctor often prescribes a probiotic in addition to the antibiotic. It is also advisable to eat natural yoghurts with live cultures during this time. If fungal infection is experienced, your doctor will prescribe a strong broad spectrum antifungal treatment. If, despite taking antibiotics, you develop an infection in your wound, you should inform your doctor at once. This might be due to resistant organisms, necessitating a different antibiotic spectrum.

### **6. What will my recovery time be?**

Pain, as well as being afraid to cause any damage to your operation / wound, prevents patients from mobilizing sufficiently. Although it is correct not to overdo things, it is also essential to walk about. This is especially true in the early post-operative period. Any operation longer than 1 hour places patients at risk for developing a DVT. By mobilizing early, this risk is reduced. It furthermore counters lung alveoli collapse, which happens during general anaesthesia when artificial ventilation is used. Lastly it stimulates endorphin release which is a natural pain killer. You will not be able to drive a car yourself for the first 2 weeks or until you are comfortable and pain free. It is dangerous to drive if you are under the influence of pain medication that can impair your reflexes.

### **7. How do I take care of personal hygiene?**

Patients want to bath regularly. This is encouraged. However operation wounds should not get wet for the first 5 – 6 days, as the wounds are not yet sealed. Exceptions to the rule are wounds on the head, neck and groin areas. These areas have excellent blood supply and seldom become infected. When the wounds are washed, normal soap and water is just as good as medicinal soap. Showering is preferred to bathing in the early post-operative period, as the organisms and dirt is washed off in this way.

### **8. Will I experience any swelling and bruising?**

All operated wounds undergo a healing process, which is characterized by inflammation in the early stage. This leads to swelling, firmness, loss of sensation in the surrounding tissue. After a few days some redness at the wound edges is visible. Most swelling disappears at 3 - 4 weeks after the operation. However swelling in some areas can persist for more than 1 year! Bruising is also normal during the first week or so. People with bleeding tendencies, or who use medications that inhibit platelet adhesions (aspirin, ibuprofen, Voltaren™ etc) often bleed more than usual during and after the surgery. This may lead to excessive bruising or swelling. Sometimes this bleeding tendency may be responsible for the formation of a haematoma (blood clot) in the operative field. This could be so large as to necessitate surgical removal in theatre.



Tel: 012 346 0109  
 Fax: 086 519 5641  
 reception@ffbirkholtz.co.za  
 accounts@ffbirkholtz.co.za  
 www.ffbirkholtz.co.za  
 VAT Nr: 4720204397

✉ 161 Groenkloof, 0027

📍 17 George Storrar Dr,  
 Groenkloof, Pretoria  
 GPS: -25.771545, 28.210480

## 9. What complications can I expect after the surgery?

### *General*

Even though complications are not planned, they do occur from time to time. Many factors are involved. Some factors can be predicted and thus eliminated e.g. stop smoking before any surgical procedure or treating a skin infection before elective surgery to prevent disseminated infection. However some factors cannot be predicted and lead to serious complications e.g. an unidentified bleeding tendency causing a large haematoma in an operative wound requiring drainage in theatre. During your first consultation your doctor enquires about various medical conditions you might have encountered that could place you in a higher risk for developing a complication. Precautions can then be taken to prevent these complications. However, if complications occur, your doctor is trained as a specialist to deal with these complications. At times your doctor may also acquire the help of a wound care nurse, an occupational therapist, physiotherapist or even a medical colleague. Your full cooperation and patience is truly appreciated.

### *Constipation*

A number of factors during your convalescence can cause constipation. Pain medication containing opioids, lack of movement, anxiety and stress as well as a change of eating habits all contribute. This condition usually lasts only a few days. By walking around more, drinking lots of water and adding fibre to your diet this condition can often be prevented. Your doctor can prescribe medication for the treatment of constipation, however this is seldom required.

## 10. Do I have to worry about scarring?

Different people scar differently. Some may have thin inconspicuous scars while other form thick ridges or hypertrophic scars (keloids). It is not predictable how your scar will turn out after some time. What we do know is that scars mature over many months. Your scars may undergo a period of widening before eventually reaching stable maturity. There is no proof that using any scar lotions or creams will improve the eventual outcome of the scar, or accelerate the maturation process.

**What we do believe in:** Sun exposure on fresh scars is not advised. Scars will “tan” permanently if exposed to uv radiation. Therefore use sunscreen on healed scars daily following any surgery. Continue with this routine for at least 6 months.

Starting a month after surgery or wounding, regular firm circular massage will help the internal wound healing by increasing local blood flow. Similar effects can be achieved with ultrasound or laser treatment. This massage should also be continued for 4 – 6 months.

Silicone contact with fresh scars can aid in reducing excessive scarring. Many forms of silicone are available for scar management. Plasters, gels and spray on preparations all have similar efficacies. Beware these products can be costly, taking in to consideration that the silicone products need to be used for also about 5 months.

If, despite all attempts to prevent excessive scarring, your scars do enlarge, associated with itching and pain, your doctor can give a course of intralesional corticosteroids. This works very well in most patients to flatten and soften the scars. Unacceptable scars are treated conservatively for at least 1 year, to achieve maturity, before any surgical intervention is performed to improve the scar appearance.

## 11. When will I have to see the doctor again after surgery?

After discharge from the hospital / clinic, and you have not received a follow-up date yet, you must call the doctor's rooms for your follow-up appointment. This is usually scheduled for approximately 1 week after your surgery or discharge date, except where a different arrangement between you and the doctor is made. During this visit wounds are inspected for dehiscence, infection, haematoma or other complications. Drains are mostly removed during this visit, depending on the amounts drained of course. Scar management counselling is also given during this visit. If you have any problems requiring your doctor's attention, it is essential to contact your doctor's rooms without delay, to schedule earlier visits.



Tel: 012 346 0109  
 Fax: 086 519 5641  
 reception@ffbirkholtz.co.za  
 accounts@ffbirkholtz.co.za  
 www.ffbirkholtz.co.za  
 VAT Nr: 4720204397

✉ 161 Groenkloof, 0027

📍 17 George Storrar Dr,  
 Groenkloof, Pretoria  
 GPS: -25.771545, 28.210480