

# Experts in Skin & Hair

## Curettage & Cautery

### What is curettage?

Curettage is a scraping technique that is used to destroy the top layer of the skin and is commonly used to remove pre-cancerous and cancerous skin lesions. It is also used to remove superficial skin lesions like seborrhoeic keratoses. After the skin has been curetted, an electrical device is used to cauterize the skin and further destroy any cells that may have been left behind. You will hear a buzzing sound and smell smoke. It is common to carry out this procedure 2 or 3 times for cancerous lesions.

### Does it hurt?

Curettage is carried out under a local anaesthetic, an injection into the skin that numbs the area. You may have had local anaesthetic before a dental procedure. The anaesthetic stings for 10-20 seconds and then you should feel no pain. If you have ever experienced problems with local anaesthetic before please inform the doctor.

### Does it leave a scar?

Yes. All surgical procedures will leave a mark on the skin. This is usually slightly pink to start with and will fade to leave a white scar, roughly the size of the lesion. The scar may be more obvious in patients who have had a skin cancer treated as the curettage often goes deeper. Rarely a thickened scar (keloid) may form. If you have had problems with scars before please inform the doctor.

### Do I need to do anything after the procedure?

The anaesthetic will last a couple of hours. There may be some pain after this. Taking paracetamol before the anaesthetic wears off, and regularly for the first day, may help.

The wound from curettage is like a deep graze. We recommend applying Vaseline to the wound regularly to improve healing. It usually takes 2-3 weeks to heal completely.

### Is it likely to get infected?

Wound infections are uncommon. It is normal for the wound to ooze and a crust to form. If redness develops in the surrounding skin or the wound suddenly becomes much more painful then you may need some treatment for a wound infection.

