DR. BRAD BIDWELL

PATIENT GUIDE

Skin Cancer Surgery

Excision & Care

A clear, simple guide to help you prepare for your skin cancer excision and care for the wound afterwards, covering what happens on the day and how to support healing.

Under the care of **Dr Brad Bidwell** · MBBS, BSc.(Hons), PhD, FRACS

ABOUT THE PROCEDURE

What is a skin cancer excision?

A skin cancer excision is a procedure to remove a skin cancer, such as a basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma or melanoma, together with a small margin of normal-looking skin around it. This helps ensure the cancer is fully removed. The tissue is then sent to the laboratory to be examined.

Most excisions are performed under **local anaesthetic** as a day procedure, so you are awake but the area is completely numb. The wound is usually closed with stitches. Sometimes a small flap or skin graft is needed to close the area neatly, which Dr Bidwell will discuss with you if it applies.

> **Why margins matter**
> Removing a margin of normal skin around the cancer gives the best chance of clearing it completely. The laboratory checks these margins, and the results guide whether any further treatment is needed. This is why follow-up is important.

Before your procedure

GETTING READY

- Tell the clinic about all medications, especially blood thinners (e.g. warfarin, aspirin, clopidogrel, apixaban, rivaroxaban), as advice will be given on whether to continue them.
- For a procedure under local anaesthetic you can usually eat normally beforehand. Follow any specific instructions you are given.
- If the area is on your face or a visible site, or if a graft may be needed, consider arranging someone to drive you home.

ON THE DAY AND AFTER

What to expect

1. **Numbing the area.** Dr Bidwell will clean the area and inject local anaesthetic. You may feel a brief sting, and then the area becomes numb. You should not feel pain during the procedure, only some pressure or movement.
2. **The excision.** The skin cancer is removed with its margin, and the wound is carefully closed with stitches. A flap or graft is used only if needed. The procedure is usually quite short.
3. **Dressing.** A dressing is applied over the wound. You will be given clear instructions on how to look after it and when to keep it dry.

Caring for your wound

Wound care. Keep the dressing clean and dry as instructed. Some tightness, mild discomfort and bruising are normal. Take simple pain relief if needed. Try to rest the area and avoid stretching or straining the wound in the first days.

Stitches and results. Stitches are usually removed after about 1 to 2 weeks, depending on the site. Your pathology results, including whether the margins were clear, are discussed at your follow-up. Protecting your skin from the sun helps reduce future risk.

> **When to seek help**
>
> Sedation and surgery are very safe, but contact the clinic or seek medical care promptly if, in the days afterwards, you experience:
>
> - Increasing redness, swelling, warmth or discharge from the wound
> - Bleeding that does not stop with gentle pressure
> - Increasing pain, or the wound opening up
> - Fever, chills or feeling generally unwell
>
> **If symptoms are severe or you are very unwell, call 000 or go to your nearest emergency department.**

Contact the clinic

If you have any questions about your preparation, procedure or recovery, please get in touch, and the team will be happy to help.

Practice	Wangaratta General Surgeons
Location	Wangaratta Private Hospital, 134 Templeton Street, Wangaratta VIC 3677
Phone	**(03) 5721 4366**
Email	reception@drbradbidwell.com.au

This guide provides general information only and is not a substitute for personalised medical advice. Always follow the specific instructions given to you by Dr Bidwell and the clinic.