

## Serial Curettage and Cautery

# What is Serial Curettage and Cautery?

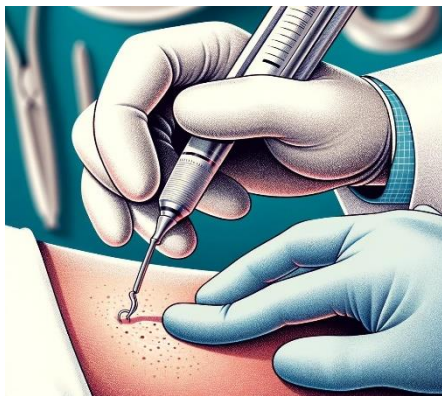
Serial curettage and cautery is a series of scoops or shaves with a spoon like instrument and the use of a radiofrequency current called cautery. Normal skin is often too tough and much easier to scoop out the damaged cancerous cells.



### Why does my doctor recommend this?

Some skin cancers grow in the very superficial skin – 0.1-0.2mm deep. These include superficial basal cell carcinomas and squamous cell carcinoma in situ. Using serial curettage and cautery clearance rates on non-head and neck areas are as high as 88-92%.

### Curettage

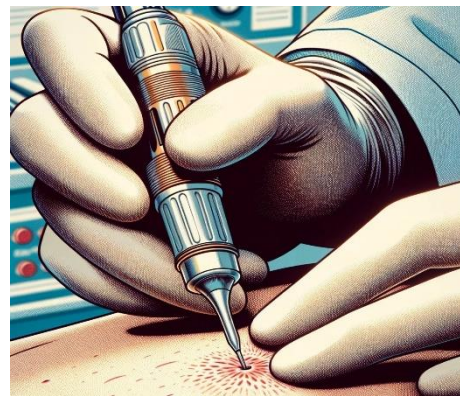


**Stage 1 - Curettage.** It is a minor procedure done under local anaesthetic. It involves removing cancerous cells by scooping them out with a sharp spoon.

#### Method

The area is first numbed with local anaesthetic, so you will not feel any pain. Then the instrument is run along normal skin until it moves freely through damaged skin. Up to a depth of 1-2mm may be removed and require several passes. No sutures are used.

### Cautery








**Stage 2 - Cautery** This uses a device that allows an electrical current to send a spark across to your skin. It can be used to stop bleeding and destroy exposed skin cells.

#### Method

The area after curettage is subjected to this method after each curettage episode. The wound should heal like a burn within 2-3 weeks.

# Serial Curettage and Cautery

## What happens next?

-  After the procedure you should keep the dressing on for 48 hours. You can shower with the dressing but no swimming.
-  Take paracetamol for pain relief if needed and avoid taking ibuprofen and aspirin (unless prescribed) as they can increase bleeding
-  If you have any increasing pain, redness or concern contact the clinic as this may be a sign of infection.
-  Discuss with your doctor how you will receive the biopsy results
-  Discuss care of the surgical site with your doctor

## Possible complications of biopsies

### Bleeding

Bleeding can occur after the procedure and is more common in people who are taking blood thinning medication. If you have any bleeding put firm pressure on the wound with a clean cloth for 15-20 minutes

### Infection

A bacterial infection of the wound can occur. This is increased with some health conditions such as diabetes or some sites such as the legs or near the groin. Signs of infection are increasing pain or increasing redness. Contact the clinic if this occurs

### Scarring

It is common for a scar to form at the biopsy site, which is usually a white patch. Some areas of the body such as the chest and upper back are more likely to result in excessive (hypertrophic or keloid) scarring.

### Recurrence of the Skin Lesion

It is estimated that 1 in 10 of the lesions will recur after serial curettage and cautery and may need further intervention such as an excision. For this reason it is important to continue regular skin checks with your skin cancer doctor.

## Doctors Notes

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