

Instructions on Leech Therapy

Plastic surgeons use leeches in microsurgery, and flap surgery where flap viability is uncertain due to venous congestion. The anti-coagulant and anti-microbial properties of the leeches' secretions serve to prevent microbial decay of blood. The leech withdraws blood from the congested flap and then gentle continued oozing occurs from the bite wound after the leech is removed. Leech Therapy is painless, well tolerated and does not result in significant scarring.

Complications, though rare have been reported with medical leech therapy. There may be an association between *Aeromonas hydrophil* wound infections and leech therapy. The use of antibiotic coverage with agents such as ciprofloxacin may reduce the risk of infections.

How to apply Leeches:

Leeches will attach themselves with both ends, however you will want the head (the smaller end) of the leech to bite where the color is the darkest (not on incision line.)

Once attached, the leech will get larger as it fills up with blood and will release suction and fall off on its

own. This may take an hour to several hours (if you have good blood flow.) After the leech falls off the bite site should continue to ooze. You may apply gauze below the nipple to catch the blood. Do not apply gauze directly on the leech bite site. Once it stops bleeding you will either have improved color to the nipple or need to apply another leech.

You may only use it for one day or you may need them for a week. You may only use one leech or you may use 20 which will all depend on the patient's needs. Dr. Crofts or his staff will help determine how long you will need to continue leech therapy.

Leeches are flown in directly from a company that takes special care in harvesting medical leeches. Due to the nature of the business and the costs associated with harvesting and shipping medical leeches, the cost per leech is \$30 and will be billed to the patient directly.

