

Removal of Soft Tissue Foreign Body

Nature of procedure

Removal of foreign body by surgery. An accurate history helps to identify the possibility and nature of foreign body.

Indications

1. Potential for inflammation or infection e.g. vegetative materials, teeth, soil
2. Established infection
3. Established or anticipated toxicity e.g. spines with venom, heavy metals
4. Functional problems e.g. nerve impingement, restriction of joint movement, persistent pain
5. Potential for later injury e.g. intra-articular location, intravascular location
6. Cosmetic and psychological reasons

Not all foreign bodies are indicated for removal. Inert objects (e.g. metal) not near vital structures can be left alone.

Intended benefits and expected outcome

1. Relief of pain and foreign body sensation
2. Prevention / Treatment of infection
3. Improvement in wound healing

Operative procedure

1. Foreign body removal can be time consuming
2. Operation is done under local or regional anaesthesia
3. X-rays or ultrasound may help to locate the foreign body, but not all foreign bodies are visible with imaging
4. Pressurized cuff or tourniquet may be used to obtain a bloodless field
5. Incision to extend or deepen wound, debridement of dead tissue may be needed
6. Foreign body identification and removal
7. Wound irrigation and closure if appropriate

Aftercare

1. Need of antibiotics depends on clinical decision
2. Wound pain and swelling should decrease over one weektime
3. Take the analgesics / antibiotics as prescribed; tetanus immunization as directed
4. Wound dressing or remove wound stitches (if necessary) in GOPC as scheduled
5. Seek help from doctor for wound related problems

Complications

1. Wound infection
2. Bleeding
3. Retained foreign body

It is impossible to mention all possible complications that may happen after the operation and the above is only a few important complications which may occur.

Consequences on refusal of treatment

1. Infection, including necrotizing fasciitis
2. Persistent pain
3. Allergic reactions to foreign bodies
4. Loss of function, nerve or tendon injuries

Remarks

In cases of difficult foreign body identification, the doctor may

- Close the wound and follow-up for progress; or
- Dress the wound and admit for further treatment

For infected wound, the doctor may choose to leave it open for daily dressing. Follow-up will be arranged for progress.