SKIN GRAFTS AND FLAPS FOR WOUND RECONSTRUCTION IN PLASTIC SURGERY

Kirk Potter, D.O.
Board Certified Plastic Surgery
Board Certified General Surgery

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INTRODUCTION

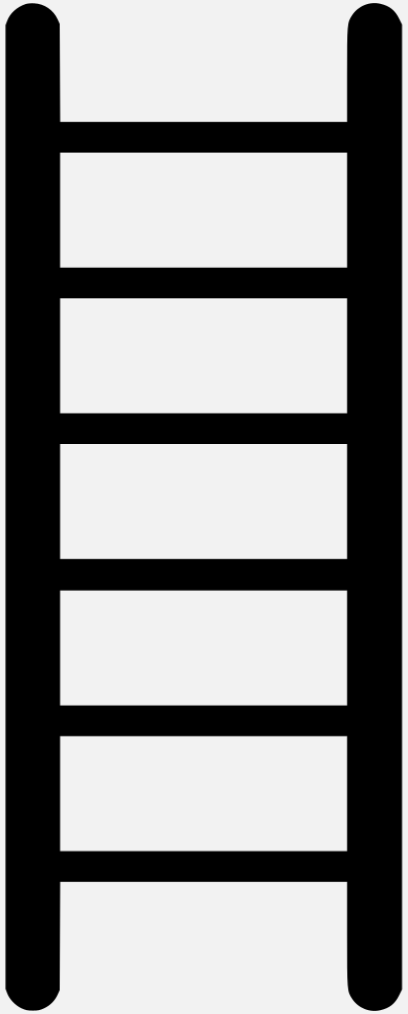
- **What are Skin Grafts and Flaps?**
  - **Skin Graft:** Transfer of skin without its blood supply, relying on the recipient site for revascularization.
  - **Flap:** Transfer of tissue (skin, fascia, muscle, or bone) with its blood supply.
- **Why Are They Important?**
  - Address large or complex wounds.
  - Balance functional and aesthetic outcomes.
  - Enable limb salvage and improve quality of life.

PRINCIPLES OF WOUND HEALING AND RECONSTRUCTION

- **Phases of Healing:**
  - *Hemostasis*: Clot formation and vascular constriction.
  - *Inflammatory*: Migration of neutrophils and macrophages.
  - *Proliferative*: Angiogenesis, fibroblast activity, and epithelialization.
  - *Remodeling*: Collagen maturation and scar contraction.
- **Factors Influencing Healing:************
  - Adequate vascular supply.
  - Control of infection and inflammation.
  - Patient comorbidities (e.g., diabetes, smoking, malnutrition).
- **Goals of Reconstruction:**
  - **Functional restoration:** Preserve motion and stability.
  - **Cosmetic considerations:** Color and texture match.
  - **Donor site preservation:** Minimize morbidity.

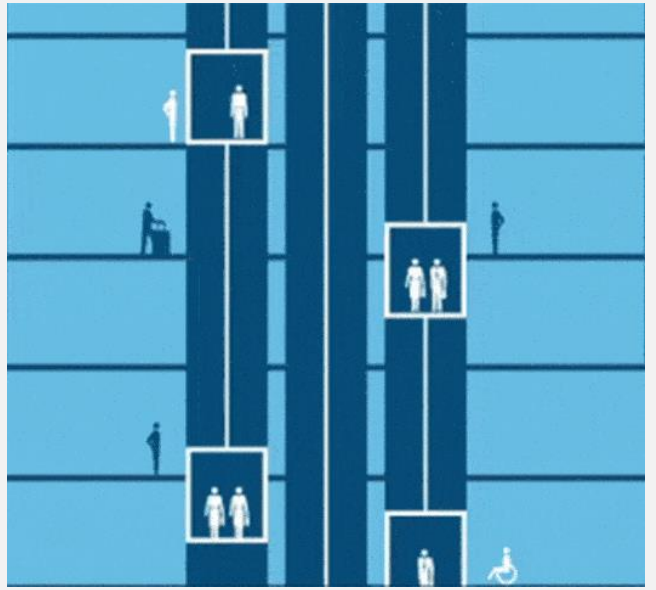
THE RECONSTRUCTIVE LADDER

1. **Healing by Secondary Intention**
    1. Let the wound heal naturally through granulation and epithelialization.
    2. Used for small, clean wounds.
2. **Primary Closure**
    1. Direct suturing of wound edges.
    2. Ideal for small, tension-free wounds.
3. **Skin Grafting**
    1. Application of skin (split-thickness or full-thickness) to cover the wound.
    2. Suitable for larger wounds with a well-vascularized bed.
4. **Local Flaps**
    1. Tissue adjacent to the wound is mobilized to cover the defect.
    2. Includes advancement, rotation, and transposition flaps.
5. **Regional Flaps**
    1. Tissue from a nearby area with its blood supply is used.
    2. Examples: Pedicled TRAM flap, axial flaps.
6. **Free Flaps**
    1. Transfer of distant tissue along with its blood supply.
    2. Requires microsurgical vascular anastomosis.
    3. Example: Anterolateral Thigh (ALT) free flap or DIEP flap.



THE RECONSTRUCTIVE ELEVATOR

- Builds on the ladder concept but encourages **skipping steps** to directly use the most appropriate method for the specific wound:
- **Concept:**
  - Instead of climbing step-by-step, assess the defect and use the best-suited reconstructive technique immediately.
  - *For example:* If a wound requires robust vascularized tissue (e.g., over exposed bone), go directly to a flap instead of trying grafts first.



LADDER VS. ELEVATOR KEY DIFFERENCES

Ladder	Elevator
Stepwise approach from simple to complex	Tailored approach, skipping unneccesary step
Emphasizes conservative progression	Focuses on efficiency and optimal outcomes
Example: Attempt to graft first for a large wound prior to utilizing a flap	Example: Directly use a flap for complex wound without attempting a graft

TYPES OF SKIN GRAFTS

- **Split-Thickness Skin Grafts (STSGs):**
  - **Harvesting:** Dermatome or razor-thin graft.
  - **Advantages:** Covers large areas, high take rate.
  - **Disadvantages:** Poor cosmetic match, risk of secondary contracture.
- **Full-Thickness Skin Grafts (FTSGs):**
  - **Harvesting:** Includes epidermis and dermis; donor site closed primarily.
  - **Advantages:** Better cosmetic and functional outcome.
  - **Disadvantages:** Limited donor site availability, lower graft take in poorly vascularized beds.
- **Composite Grafts:**
  - Use for areas requiring multiple tissue layers, e.g., nasal defects.

FLAP CLASSIFICATIONS

1. **Local Flaps:**
    1. *Advancement flap:* Moves tissue in a straight line.
    2. *Rotation flap:* Arc movement to cover defects near the donor site.
    3. *Transposition flap:* Flap rotated and placed over an adjacent area.
2. **Regional Flaps:**
    1. Examples:
        1. *Axial pattern flaps:* Blood supply from a defined artery.
        2. *Perforator flaps:* Preserves underlying muscle, e.g., ALT (anterolateral thigh) flap.
3. **Free Flaps:**
    1. Tissue transferred along with its vascular pedicle.
    2. Requires microsurgical anastomosis.
    3. Examples: *DIEP flap* (deep inferior epigastric perforator), *fibula free flap*.

FIVE TYPES OF MUSCLE FLAPS

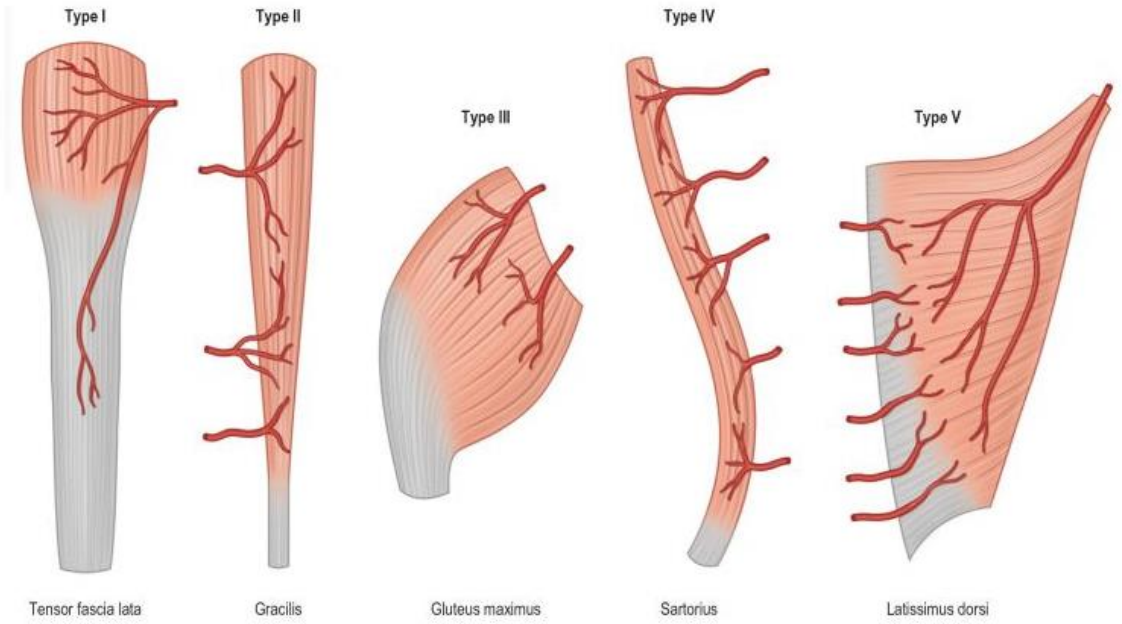


Fig. 24.4 Mathes–Nahai Classification of muscle and musculocutaneous flaps.

Mathes–Nahai Classification of muscle and musculocutaneous flaps.

Type I: one vascular pedicle
Type II: dominant vascular pedicle and minor pedicle
Type III: two dominant pedicles
Type IV: segmental vascular pedicles
Type V: one dominant vascular pedicle and secondary segmental vascular pedicles

V-Y SACRAL FLAP

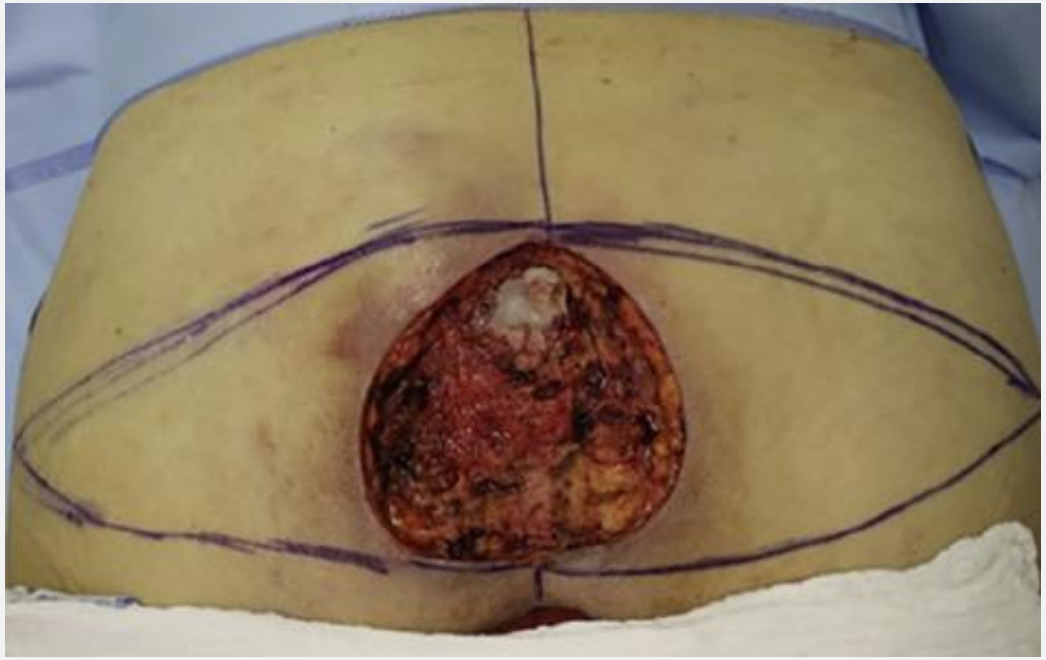


Figure A

Figure B

LIMBERG SACRAL FLAP

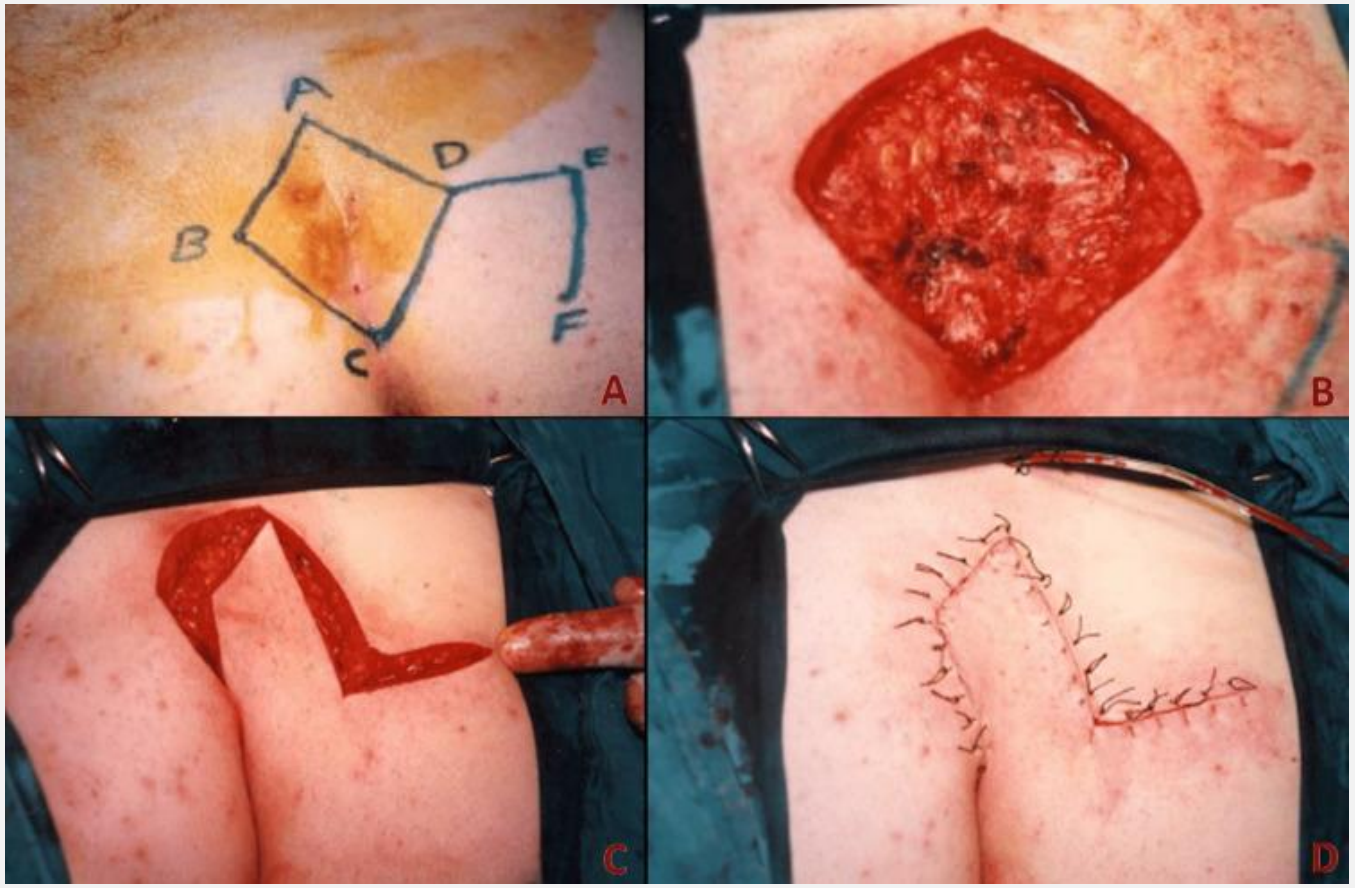


Figure C

BILOBED NOSE FLAP

Figure D

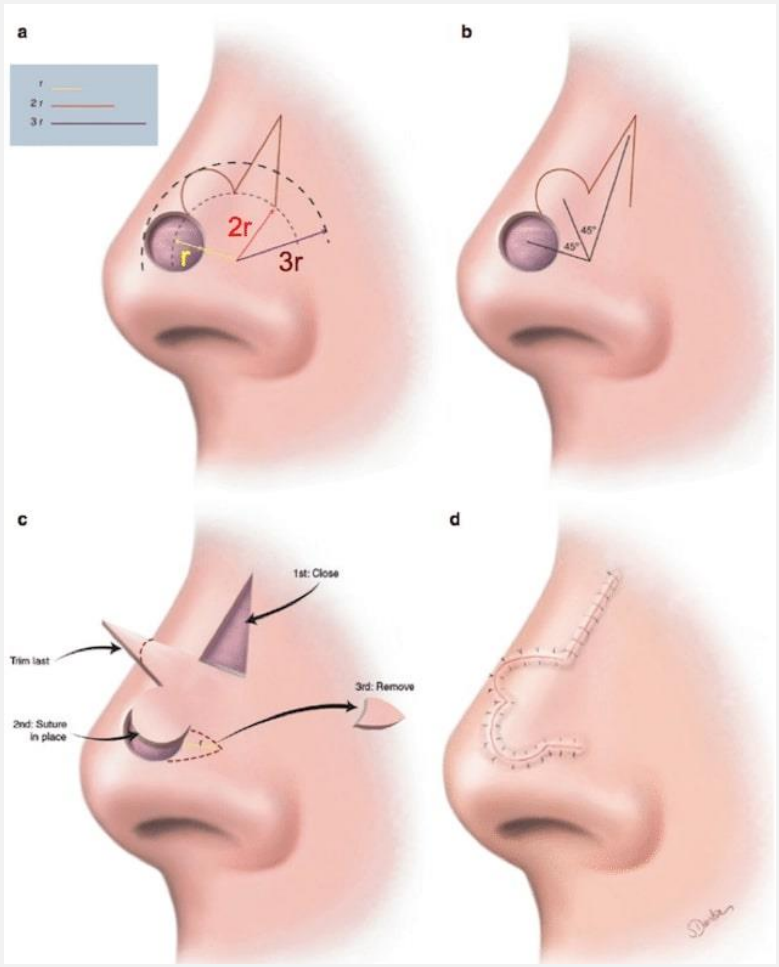


Figure E

PARAMEDIAN FOREHEAD FLAP

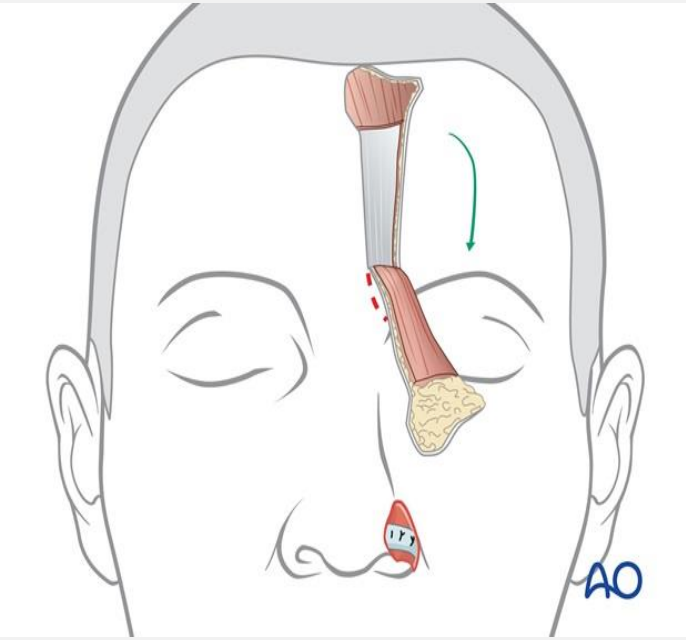


Figure F

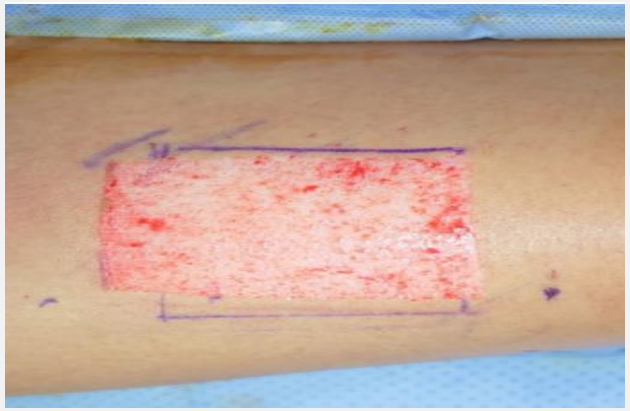
Figure G

Figure H

Figure I

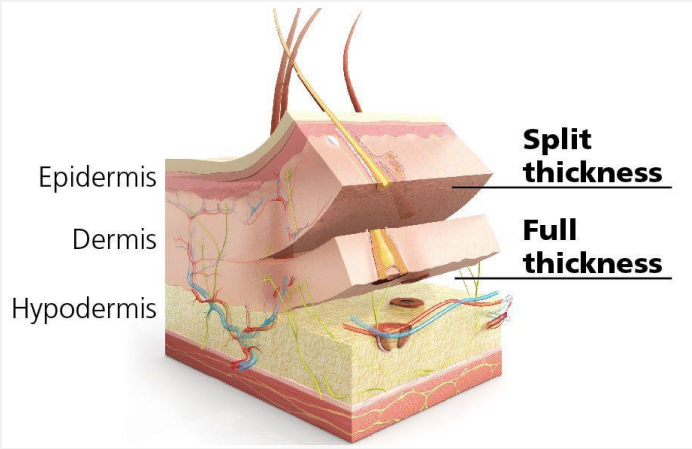
Split Thickness Skin Graft

Figures J
Recipient Site



Figures K
Donor Site

Full Thickness Skin Graft



INDICATIONS FOR SKIN GRAFTS AND FLAPS

- **Skin Grafts:**
  - Large, superficial wounds with healthy granulation tissue.
  - Burns requiring rapid closure to prevent infection.
  - Cosmetic reconstruction of small areas.
- **Flaps:**
  - Deep wounds exposing vital structures (bone, tendon, nerves).
  - Wound coverage after tumor excision.
  - Complex trauma, pressure sores, or post-infectious defects.

SURGICAL TECHNIQUES

Skin Graft Techniques:

1. **Recipient Site Preparation:**
    1. Debridement of necrotic tissue.
    2. Ensure a vascularized wound bed (e.g., granulation tissue or muscle).
2. **Graft Application:**
    1. Proper orientation, avoidance of folding.
    2. Secured with sutures, staples, or dressings.

Flap Surgery Techniques:

1. **Planning:**
    1. Consider defect size, location, and patient factors.
    2. Ensure adequate pedicle length for reach.
2. **Design:**
    1. Doppler or imaging to locate perforators.
3. **Elevation and Inset:**
    1. Meticulous dissection, tension-free inset.
4. **Post-operative Monitoring:**
    1. Assess color, temperature, capillary refill, and Doppler signals.

COMPLICATIONS

- **Skin Grafts:**
  - Failure from infection, hematoma, or inadequate recipient vascularity.
  - Pigmentary changes or scarring.
- **Flaps:**
  - Necrosis (partial or complete) from venous congestion or arterial insufficiency.
  - Donor site morbidity: scarring, functional impairment.
  - Risk of infection or wound dehiscence.

ADVANCED TECHNIQUES AND INNOVATIONS

- **Negative Pressure Wound Therapy (NPWT):**
  - Promotes granulation, reduces edema, enhances graft take.
- **Perforator Flap Techniques:**
  - Minimize donor site morbidity by sparing underlying muscle.
- **3D Surgical Planning:**
  - Virtual modeling for precise flap design.
- **Regenerative Medicine:**
  - Bioengineered skin substitutes (e.g., Integra, Apligraf).
  - Stem cell and scaffold-based therapies.

CASE STUDIES

- ***Case 1: STSG for Burn Reconstruction***
  - **Pre-op:** Extensive full-thickness burn.
  - **Procedure:** Dermatome harvesting of STSG, application to granulating bed.
  - **Outcome:** Epithelialized wound, functional mobility.
- ***Case 2: Paramedian Forehead Flap for Nasal Reconstruction***
  - **Pre-op:** Large nasal defect following excision of squamous cell carcinoma.
  - **Procedure:** Paramedian forehead flap based on the supratrochlear artery, staged reconstruction for restoring nasal contour and function.
  - **Outcome:** Achieved aesthetic nasal symmetry, functional breathing, and cure of squamous cell carcinoma.

CONCLUSION

- Skin grafts and flaps are indispensable tools for reconstructive surgery.
- Choice depends on wound characteristics, patient needs, and surgeon expertise.
- Innovations in surgical techniques and materials continue to improve outcomes.

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Q&A