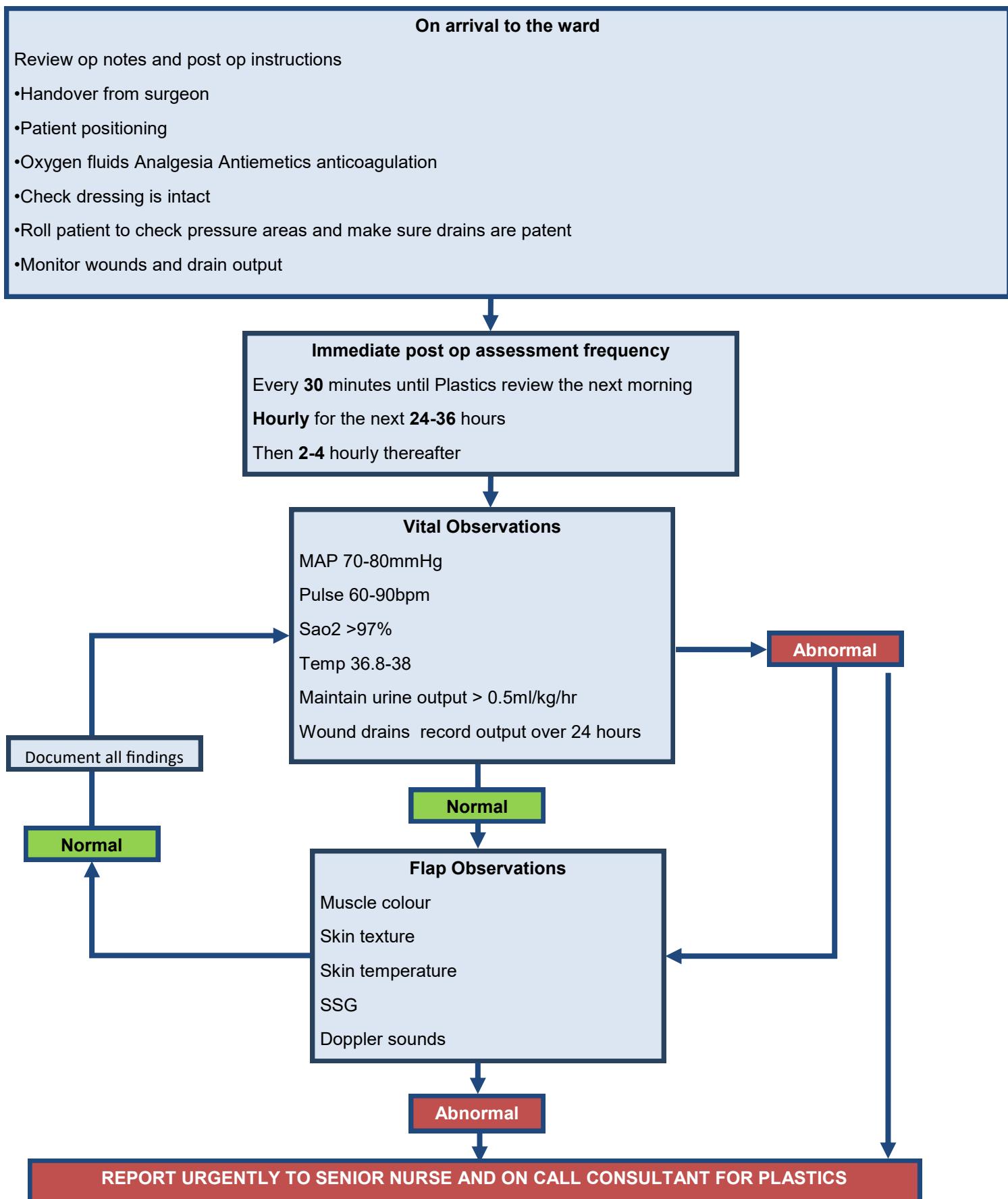


## Flow Chart for Muscle Free Flaps Observation

Muscle flaps can be particularly difficult to monitor. If a muscle free flap has been skin grafted, then the colour assessment is performed differently. In these cases it is the colour of the muscle that is assessed which should be red under normal circumstances. Muscle tissue that appears a pale or purple colour suggests an underlying vascular problem. Capillary refill assessment applies only to free flaps with a skin paddle and cannot be performed in muscle free flaps that have been skin grafted.



## Post Op Care Guidelines Following Muscle Free Flap Surgery

|                   |  |               |   |
|-------------------|--|---------------|---|
| Vital signs       | <b>BP</b>                                    | MAP 70-80mmHg | Low BP and abnormal pulse may indicate hypovlaemia which indicates inadequate blood supply.   |
|                   | <b>Pulse</b>                                 | 60-90         | Compare with pre op.<br>Tachycardia can indicate pain which results in adrenaline being released causing vasoconstriction –resulting in poor perfusion of the flap.   |
|                   | <b>Sats 02</b>                               | >97%          | Low SaO <sub>2</sub> may lead to inadequate tissue perfusion.   |
|                   | <b>RR</b>                                    |               | A raised respiratory rate may indicate pain or anxiety. Meaning adrenaline is being released causing vasoconstriction – resulting in poor perfusion of the flap   |
| Urine output      | <b>Temp</b>                                  | 36.5– 38      |   |
|                   | <b>&gt;0.5ml/kg/hr</b>                       |               | Is indicative for tissue perfusion.<br>Poor output can indicate dehydration which leads to inadequate perfusion of the flap.<br>Keep patient hydrated and monitor fluid intake.<br>Ensure IV fluids are prescribed. |
| Flap observations | <b>Colour</b>                                |               | Observe for any changes in muscle colour. Pale or purple in colour indicates reduced arterial supply or venous return.  |
|                   | <b>Texture</b>                               |               | Flaccid / Empty flap may indicate poor arterial supply.<br>Firm / Swollen flap may indicate venous congestion.  |
|                   | <b>Temp</b>                                  |               | Cold—indicates inadequate blood supply.<br>Increased warmth—could indicate an abnormal inflammatory response.   |
|                   | <b>SSG</b>                                   |               | If the SSG is not looking healthy and normal this could be a indication of poor perfusion.  |
| Doppler signal    | Watch for any changes in Doppler signal      |               | Double check with senior nurse.<br>Report to Plastics consultant.   |
| Wound drains      | Monitor the wound drains (amount and colour) |               | Excess drainage can indicate active bleeding.   |
| Positioning       | Follow post op instructions                  |               | This is important to avoid pressure, kinking or tension of the vessels and control swelling.  |

**REPORT URGENTLY TO SENIOR NURSE AND ON CALL CONSULTANT FOR PLASTIC**

**CAUTION:** This information is intended to serve as a general statement regarding appropriate patient care practices based upon the available medical literature and clinical expertise at the time of development. This should not be considered to be accepted protocol or policy, nor are intended to replace clinical judgment or dictate the care of individual patients.