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The skin’s structure consists of the outer epidermis (ecto dermal in origin), the dermis and the inner hypodermis (of mesodermal origin). The deepest layer of the epidermis is the stratum basale, where stem cells di ff erentiate into keratinocytes and migrate upwards towards the outermost stratum corneum an acellular layer made of dead keratinocytes acting as a barrier to fluid loss and protection against invasion by micro organisms. The epidermis regenerates from deeper follicular elements such as hair follicles and sweat glands. The dermis is connected to the epidermis via the basement membrane and consists of the upper papillary layer, composed of loose connective tissue, and a dee per reticular layer, which is thicker and consists of dense connective tissue and collagen fibres . The dermis houses the hair follicles, sweat glands, sen sory receptors and blood vessels. Geo ff rey Ian Taylor , contemporary , Professor of Plastic Surgery , University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia. skin appendages, including hair follicles, sensory receptors, neurones and blood vessels. The relative composition of these lay ers varies depend - ing on the functional requirements of the region concerned. Specialised areas such as hair-bearing scalp skin or glabrous heel skin can be challenging to reconstruct as there are limited donor sites. However, for non-specialised skin, the abdomen and groin make ideal donor sites as the y are elastic and thin and, thus, amenable to primary closure. Blood vessels are found in the dermis and hypodermis and are arranged in a number of plexuses between each anatomical layer (Figure 47.3). Ultimately , they all originate from a main feeding or sour ce vessel, via fine perforating vessels (‘perforators’) either directly or indirectly by traversing through fascia, muscle or bone. This observation gave rise to Taylor’s ‘angiosome’ concept, in which angiosomes refer to three- dimensional blocks of tissue including skin and deeper tissue layers that are supplied by specific source arteries. Thus, any skin or other tissue types can be detached as a ‘flap’ provided the vessel course from the source vessel to the end organ that is to be transferred is kept intact. - Cutaneous nerves tend to run axially out of the major nerve trunks but are less defined than most perforating blood vessels. It is possible to coapt nerve ends between a cutaneous nerve within a flap and one at the recipient site, so-called , ‘neurotisation’, to r egain some sensation in the flap. -

Figure 47.1 Pedicled groin flap. Full-thickness burn wounds over the dorsum of multiple digits. The exposed extensor tendons were covered by a pedicled groin flap. The pedicle was divided at 3 weeks and the digits were subsequently separated in stages. Figure 47.2 Three views of an anterolateral thigh flap on detachment from the donor site prior to anastomosis at the recipient site. Pedicle (arrow) consisting of one perforator artery and two vena comitans.

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