



POST-OP HEAD AND NECK SURGERY INSTRUCTIONS

FLUIDS: It is very important to remember to stay hydrated after any surgery.

DIET: There are no diet restrictions after the surgery. You may eat anything you can tolerate.

ACTIVITY RESTRICTIONS AND RETURNING TO SCHOOL/WORK: Typically you will need a minimum of 5 days to recover, but 7-10 days is preferable. Limit straining, lifting, and bending over for the first week as this will increase the risk of bleeding. You must not go to work if you are still taking narcotic pain medications. If you are doing well enough to only take Ibuprofen or acetaminophen then you may go back to school/work. If you go back to school/work, you can still use the narcotics at night, but not during the day.

DRAIN: You may have a drain that comes out of a small incision below the surgery site. The drain will be in for 24 to 48 hours to remove fluid that builds up under the skin. Your nurse will give you instructions and guidance on taking care of the drain at home. You will need to come back to the office within 1-2 days of surgery to have the drain removed.

SHOWER/BATHING: You may shower any time after surgery. Let warm soapy water run over your incision. Do not submerge the incision in water. Do not rub or scrub the incision. When drying – do not rub – just pat the wound gently with a clean towel.

MEDICATIONS: The typical medications given after surgery are –

- **Pain medicine** – Typically you will be prescribed either Lortab (hydrocodone/acetaminophen) or Percocet tablets (oxycodone/acetaminophen). You may use over the counter medications instead if the pain is mild, such as ibuprofen or plain Tylenol. You should not drive or go to work while still using the Lortab or Percocet.
- **Antibiotic:** You may be given a prescription for an antibiotic to prevent an infection while you are healing, but this is not always necessary.
- **Ointment:** Please apply ointment to the incision 2-3 times per day after your dressing has been removed by your doctor.

FOLLOW-UP: Each patient who undergoes surgery should be seen in our office within 5-7 days. This appointment should be scheduled at the time you scheduled your surgery, but if this was overlooked, please call the office to schedule this visit. If you were discharged with a drain, you should be seen in 1-2 days for removal in the office.

SCAR CARE: To help improve the final outcome of the scar you can do several things. First, keep ointment on the incision at all times for the first two weeks to keep it moist and clean. After two weeks you can begin to use vitamin E oil or creams that are massaged into the scar area twice a day. You may also consider over-the-counter silicone gel sheets, roll on films, or the product Mederma. All of these things will help with scarring if used daily for at least 3 months; however it can take up to 12 months to be effective. If you have a concern or feel the scar is too noticeable, please bring it to the doctor's attention. Even if it is months/years after the surgery something can still be done to improve an already healed scar. Remember that the greatest factor in how well you will scar, unfortunately, is not how well the wound was closed, but on your own genetics and skin properties.

NUMBNESS: It is likely that an area around the wound will be numb or have a change in sensation. This is normal and unavoidable. It will improve over weeks to months, but in some cases it never feels exactly the same.

MUSCLE WEAKNESS: This is a rare and unlikely problem after surgery, but in some cases a nerve that controls muscle function will be irritated during surgery and cause a temporary weakness. If this occurs, the weakness may exist for several weeks and in rare cases last for months or permanently. Again, this is a rare complication but if you should notice anything feels weak you should contact the doctor to discuss it.

QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS: Should you have any concerns, questions, or problems during your post-operative recovery period, please do not hesitate to contact the office at [208-656-9646](tel:208-656-9646) during business hours, or [208-419-3254](tel:208-419-3254) after hours. If unable to reach our nurse on call, please go to Madison Memorial Hospital ER and they will page your doctor.

Sincerely – Dr.'s McMaster and Peterson