



NECK DISSECTION POST OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

POST OPERATIVE CARE

Neck dissection and excision of neck mass procedures are performed to remove malignant and benign tumors, abnormal/malignant lymph nodes or congenital cysts. You may be hospitalized for one or two nights following your procedure. If necessary, a small plastic drain may be placed in the neck during your surgery to prevent accumulation of blood under the skin flap which will be removed either in the hospital or in our office.

Do not wash or manipulate the neck wound for 48 hours following the surgery. You will find that the incision has been closed with sutures which will be removed at your follow-up appointment. Mild redness and swelling around the wound is normal and should slowly improve over the next 2 weeks following your surgery. After 2 days, you may remove your neck bandage and start applying a thin layer of antibiotic ointment (e.g. Polysporin) to the wound 3 times daily. This is best accomplished by washing your hands thoroughly with soap and water and then gently coating the wound with ointment using your finger. You may shower and allow the wound to get wet 48 hours following the surgery. Allow soap and water to run over the wound. Do not scrub or manipulate the wound for 7 days. Pat the area dry; don't rub it with a towel. After 7 days you may gently lather the wound with soap and water.

MEDICATIONS

Patients report moderate neck pain for several days following neck dissection or neck mass excision. This is usually well controlled with a prescribed narcotic pain medication. Take your medication with food and do not drink alcohol or drive while using pain medication. As your pain lessens, switch to extra-strength acetaminophen (Tylenol). You should avoid non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen (Excedrin®, Motrin®, Naprosyn®, Advil®) because these drugs are mild blood thinners and will increase your chances of having a post-operative bleed. If you are taking a narcotic medication regularly you may begin to experience constipation and you should start an over the counter stool softener (such as Docusate Sodium) 1-2 days prior to your surgery.

ACTIVITY

Sleep with the head elevated for the first 48 hours. You may use two pillows to do this or sleep in a reclining chair. Gentle rotation, flexion and extension of the head and neck is permitted. The first few days, it is recommended to sleep and rest (watch TV or read a book). Going for a walk during the first few days is a good idea. After the first week you may slowly progress your activity. No heavy lifting or straining for 2 weeks following the surgery.



DIET

Unless otherwise directed, you may have liquids by mouth once you have awakened from anesthesia. If you tolerate the liquids without significant nausea or vomiting then you may take solid foods without restrictions. Generally, patients experience a mild sore throat for 2-3 days following neck surgery. This usually does not interfere with swallowing.

GENERAL ANESTHESIA

Do not drive for 24 hours following general anesthesia or while taking pain medication. Do not drink any alcohol for 24 hours following general anesthesia or while taking pain medication. You must arrange for a ride and have a responsible adult stay with you for 24 hours after surgery.

WORK

Most patients plan to take 1 week off of work to recover. If your job requires manual labor you should be out of work for 2 weeks or return with limited duty. Every patient is different and some return to work sooner. This will depend on the extent of your surgery, your recovery experience and the nature of your work. If you have a desk job, you may be able to return to work sooner.

TRAVEL

No airplane travel for at least 1 week following surgery.

CALL OUR OFFICE (760) 479-2100

For a persistent temperature above 101.5 degrees or severe chills, nausea or vomiting, pain not relieved by oral medication, difficulty breathing, profuse bleeding, redness, swelling or drainage from incision.

FOLLOW UP APPOINTMENTS

Your post-operative visit is approximately 7-10 days after surgery. At this time, we will remove your sutures, review your pathology results and discuss whether further testing is necessary. These appointments should already be scheduled for you by our surgery scheduler.