

Head and Neck Surgery

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ENT North

General Information

- After an anaesthetic, it is common to feel groggy for up to 24 hours. Nausea +/- vomiting is quite common after an anaesthetic. Medication can be given if this is difficult to tolerate.
- Depending on the exact operation, pain can vary from very mild to significant. Ask your surgeon about how to manage any expected pain.
- Your surgeon will explain if there are any restrictions in what you can and can't eat after your operation. Unless you have had an operation on the throat or mouth, there are usually no restrictions in what you can eat or drink.
- Arrange for someone else to drive you home from the hospital.

Pain Relief/Antibiotics

Your surgeon will provide a script for pain relief, or instructions on what to buy from the chemist. Pain relief works best if used as soon as you feel the pain start, rather than waiting for it to become severe.

- Paracetamol (Panadol, Chemist's Own etc): use this regularly (four times a day, spread evenly throughout the day), to keep your pain at least partially controlled. Adults should use two tablets (1g) for each dose.
- Stronger pain relief: e.g. codeine, oxycodone. Use one tablet when you feel the pain start, and another twenty minutes later if the first is not enough. Adjust the dose over the first few days based on how you find their effect.
- Anti-inflammatory medication (e.g. Nurofen): these are usually quite safe to take after head and neck surgery. Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any specific concerns.

If your surgeon prescribes antibiotics, oral steroids, or any other medications for you, take them as directed.

Wound Care

- Your wound can be washed and allowed to get wet after the first 24 hours. Use a sopping wet soapy flannel to gently loosen any dried clots or scabs along the wound edge and allow these to gently lift off to keep the wound line clean. Gently pat dry with a clean towel.
- If there are steri-strips on your wound (a narrow paper band-aid dressing), leave these intact until your first post-operative visit.
- After one week, you are welcome to apply skin cream to the area.

Activities

- Take the remainder of the day off once you get home from your operation. Sometimes the 'hangover' of the anaesthetic can last through the next day, so anticipate having this off. Many people feel well enough to get back to regular activities the next day.
- Check with your surgeon about when to return to work. Most people are right to get back to work after one week for sedentary work, or two weeks if your job is physically strenuous.
- Be careful with driving if you still feel groggy from the anaesthetic, or if the seatbelt or moving your head causes pain.
- Avoid strenuous exercise (team sports, jogging, heavy weights etc) for two -three weeks after the operation, and be sensible when you recommence these.

When to Seek Medical Advice

- A fever of >38 degrees.
- New fresh bleeding, increasing swelling, redness or increasing pain around your wound.
- Excessive sedation from pain relief tablets.
- Severe pain, nausea with vomiting, or severe dizziness, especially if it persists for more than a day.
- If you/your child can't drink enough fluid/eat enough to avoid dehydration.

Please call your surgeon for advice if any of the above occur, or if you have any other concerns.

- Dr Amott advises adult patients present to Royal Melbourne Hospital if they are able to, and that paediatric patients be taken to either the Royal Children's Hospital or Austin Health.
- Dr Yuen advises both adult and paediatric patients to present to Austin Health (or Royal Children's Hospital for paediatric patients) if further assessment is needed.

Follow-Up

- Please make an appointment about 1-2 weeks after your operation to see your surgeon.
- Your surgeon may make this appointment for you after your operation. Please feel free to contact the rooms if the date, time or location is inconvenient, as it is usually possible to change.
- Any stitches need to be removed 1-2 weeks after your surgery. If there is a delay in your appointment please clarify if you need to see your family doctor to have these removed.