



Neck Dissection Postoperative Instructions

- Keep the incision dry for seven to 10 days while the steri-strips are in place. After the steri-strips are removed at the office on your follow-up appointment, gently wash the incision with soap and water two to three times a day as needed. After each washing, apply a thin film of an antibacterial ointment (e.g., Polysporin). Avoid any activity that pulls across the incision such as shaving around the incision for at least two weeks (the rest of the face may be shaved). Most sutures are dissolvable. Any staples or sutures that need to be removed will be done on your follow-up appointment seven to 10 days post-surgery.
- Some patients are discharged with a thin drain tube and oval collecting reservoir called a grenade. Please empty the grenade and record the amount of fluid whenever the grenade looks half full or at least two times a day. Discard the fluid down a sink or toilet – do not save it. Bring the daily recorded amounts to your follow-up appointment.
- Elevate the head of your bed 30 to 45 degrees for the first three to four days to decrease swelling. The skin above the incision may look swollen after lying down for a few hours.
- Avoid any activity that raises your blood pressure for at least one week (e.g., heavy lifting, strenuous exercise, etc.).
- You may eat a regular diet after surgery. The nerves controlling movement of the lips, tongue and shoulder and sensation of the tongue and earlobe may be affected with the surgery temporarily or permanently as discussed on your pre-op office visit. If temporary, movement should improve several weeks to months after the surgery. If the oral “pucker” muscles are weak, you may drool slightly when drinking.
- Pain can be mild to moderate for the first 24 to 48 hours. The sooner you can reduce your narcotic medication use, the more rapid your recovery. As your pain lessens, try using extra-strength acetaminophen (Tylenol) instead of your narcotic medication to reduce constipation.
- Shoulder exercises may be started in the first week after surgery if needed on instruction by your physician. Try to raise both arms out sideways and hold steady for several seconds. You may use small weights if desired. A physical therapist may be needed to help with your instruction.