

Neck Mass Excision - Post Operative Instructions

Surgery

Neck mass removal involves general anesthesia, typically for 1-2 hours. Patients may be sedated for several hours after surgery and may remain sleepy for much of the day. You may have nausea or vomiting, but it usually goes away by the evening of surgery without additional medication. Most patients go home the same day as surgery.

Incision

Your incision is closed with absorbable sutures and will have a tape bandage or skin glue over it. You can shower and wash your hair as usual the day after surgery. You may wash in a bathtub if you are careful not to get your neck wet. Do not soak or scrub the incision. You might notice bruising around your incision and slight swelling above the scar when you are upright. You may have numbness of the skin around the incision. In addition, the scar may become pink and hard. This hardening will peak at about 3 weeks and may result in some tightness, which will disappear over the next 2 to 3 months.

You should apply sunscreen on your incision site starting 3 weeks after surgery EVERY day for the first year after surgery. This will prevent a red or pink scar and give you the best cosmetic result for your scar. A daily moisturizer with sunscreen (example Oil of Olay with SPF 15) is fine.

Limitations

You can start resuming normal activities as tolerated 7 days after surgery. For some patients, lifting can cause pain and stretching at the surgery site for up to 3 weeks after surgery. You should not drive or drink alcohol while taking pain medications. Most people can return to work/school 2 weeks after surgery, but there may be physical limitations. Your surgeon will review your specific limitations and release you when you are ready to return to work.

Medication

Pain medication can be used as prescribed. Pain is expected after surgery. Your neck will be sore, and pain will be worse when the neck is stretched. As the surgical site heals, pain will go away over the course of a week. Pain medications can cause nausea, which can be prevented if you take them with food or milk.

Bacitracin ointment can be applied to the incision once the tape is removed or the glue peels off. This prevents scabbing and itching. Take all of your routine medications as prescribed, unless told otherwise by your surgeon. Any medications that thin the blood should be avoided. These include aspirin and aspirin-like products (Advil, Motrin, Excedrin, Alleve, Celebrex, Naproxyn).

Pain

The main complaint following neck surgery is pain with swallowing and neck movement. Some people experience a dull ache, while others feel a sharp pain. This should not keep you from eating anything you want and will improve daily after surgery.

Reasons to Call Your Surgeon's Office

- Persistent fever over 101° F
- Bleeding from the neck incision
- Increasing neck swelling
- Pain that is not relieved by your medications
- Drainage of pus from the incision
- Redness surrounding the incision that is worsening or getting bigger

- Bleeding is possible after surgery, and the most serious cases may cause trouble breathing. Symptoms include rapid swelling in the neck, trouble breathing, and red and purple discoloration of the skin over the incision. Please call doctor immediately, or if trouble breathing is present, call 911 or go to the closest emergency room