

Discharge Instructions

Carotid Endarterectomy

Activity

- ◆ **Do not lift anything heavier than 5 pounds (a gallon of milk); no bending, straining, or strenuous activity for the first 2 weeks.**
- ◆ No driving for 7 days or while taking prescription pain medications. You may ride in a car. It is important that you have the ability to turn your head quickly without discomfort while operating a vehicle. This may not be possible for some people for 1-2 weeks after surgery.
- ◆ Walk as often as you wish. Walk short distances at first and increase slowly. Avoid exercising in extreme temperatures.
- ◆ You may have some slight dizziness, a mild headache or tiredness for a few days.
- ◆ You may go up and down stairs. Hold onto the rail for the first few days after surgery because you may experience dizziness.
- ◆ If you smoke, please quit. Smoking increases your chances of developing heart disease, carotid artery disease, lung cancer, and peripheral vascular disease. It can also delay wound healing.

Personal Hygiene/Shower

- ◆ **You may shower the next day after your surgery.**
- ◆ Use soap and water to gently clean the incision. Do not scrub the incision. Pat dry with a clean towel.
- ◆ Do not soak in a tub, whirlpool, or hot tub, or go swimming until the incision is completely healed. This is generally 3-4 weeks for most people.

Diet

- ◆ **Resume the diet you were on before your surgery unless otherwise directed.**
- ◆ For most people a low saturated fat and cholesterol diet which is high in fruits, vegetables and whole grains is a good healthy diet unless otherwise directed by your doctor.

Incision

- ◆ **There will be an area of numbness along the incision in the neck and toward the chin. The earlobe may also be affected. This generally goes away and may last for 6-12 months.**
- ◆ Your neck incision is about 3-4 inches in length. The sutures under the skin will dissolve on their own. Take a close look at the incision in the mirror so that you will know what it looks like before leaving the hospital and will notice changes if they occur at home.
- ◆ For the first couple of days sleep on a couple of pillows to help with the swelling in the neck around the incision.
- ◆ You may apply an ice pack for the first 48 hours after surgery to the neck incision. It should be applied for 15 minutes, then off for 15 minutes. This may help with swelling and discomfort.
- ◆ Men may find it more difficult to shave with a blade and may switch to an electric razor. Do not shave over the incision; go around it until the incision is healed.
- ◆ Your incision will take several months to heal completely. It may feel raised and thickened for a while and will decrease over time. It takes 2-3 weeks for the swelling to go away. No ointments, lotions, creams or bandages should be applied to the incision.
- ◆ If you have paper strips (steri-strips) in the neck area, they will fall off. After the first 2-3 days they will begin to loosen, and can be gently removed over the first week when you shower. In the meantime, the edges can be trimmed with scissors if you desire.

Medications

You have been prescribed



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- ☐ Aspirin 81 mg daily
- ☐ Plavix 75 mg daily
- ☐ Coumadin
- ☐ Other _____

- ◆ **It is VERY important that you take these medications as directed.**
- ◆ Most people do not have very much pain with this surgery. You can take over the counter Tylenol (Acetaminophen) for mild discomfort. Take it as directed on the packaging.
- ◆ You will be prescribed a pain medication for moderate discomfort, take it as directed. Do **NOT** take additional Tylenol with prescription pain medication. One of the side effects of pain medications is constipation and nausea. Most people will have nausea if it is taken on an empty stomach. Eat a small snack with pain medication to avoid this side effect. Drinking plenty of fluid and eating high fiber foods (fruits, vegetables and whole grains) can help prevent constipation. If needed you can take Docusate Sodium (Colace) 100 mg, a stool softener, once or twice a day. This can be purchased at any drug store. A laxative may be needed if the constipation continues. Generally, an over the counter laxative, such as Dulcolax tablets, is recommended (take it as directed on the manufacturers packaging). If you take one dose of this laxative and your constipation is not relieved, call your nurse practitioner or physician assistant for further instructions.
- ◆ Your updated medication list will be given to you before you leave the hospital. New prescriptions will be provided to you and education regarding new medications provided. Please take the time to read this information. It is important for you to have a good understanding of what medications you are taking.

Call Your Surgeon for Any of These Symptoms @ (478) 743-9762

- ◆ **Increasing pain or swelling in the neck causing difficulty breathing or swallowing.**
- ◆ Sudden or severe headache. A headache that will not go away.
- ◆ Changes in your eyesight, problem speaking, or problem swallowing.
- ◆ Weakness on one side of your body.
- ◆ Increasing pain, not relieved by pain medication.
- ◆ Fever above 101 degrees.
- ◆ Redness, an increase in swelling or bruising around your incision. There may be some slight drainage the first couple of days from the incision, but this should stop and the incision should be dry. If there is continued drainage or pus the surgeon should be called.

If you cannot reach your doctor, go to the nearest emergency room for immediate assessment.

Reducing Your Risks

- ◆ All patients with vascular disease should take important steps to prevent worsening of their condition or development of new disease. It is very important that if you smoke to quit. Good medical management of high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and diabetes, along with maintaining a normal body weight is encouraged to all of our patients. This is one of the reasons why routine follow-up with your primary care physician is very important to your continued health and well-being.

Follow-up appointment

- ◆ A follow-up appointment will be provided for you before you leave the hospital about 4 weeks after your surgery. During this visit you will undergo carotid artery duplex scanning. It is extremely important that you make this appointment because we need to evaluate the post-surgical carotid artery for normal blood flow. Additionally, you should make a follow-up appointment with your primary care physician in the next 1-2 weeks.

Returning to Work

- ◆ This is generally discussed at the follow-up visit. If you have a desk job, you may be able to return to work earlier than someone with a job requiring physical labor. If you want to return to work earlier than 4 weeks this should be discussed with your surgeon prior to leaving the hospital.