

Head and Neck Surgery

General Information

- After an anaesthetic, it is common to feel groggy for up to 24 hours. Children are often quite disorientated for the first hour or so. 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.
- 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.

Typical types of pain relief include:

- Paracetamol (Panadol, Chemist's Own etc): use this regularly (four times a day, spread evenly throughout the day), as your 'first line' pain relief. Make sure you use the dose appropriate for your/your child's weight, rather than purely based on age.
- Stronger pain relief: e.g. codeine, oxycodone. This may be prescribed as an additional medication, or in a pre-prepared mix with paracetamol (e.g. PainStop, Panadeine Forte). If using a combination medication, make sure you use it IN PLACE of paracetamol, rather than as well as this, to avoid overdosing.
- Anti-inflammatory medication (e.g. ibuprofen, diclofenac): 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 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.
- Any drain tube site can be kept covered with a simple dressing for the first few days. Change this as often as you need to, to keep it clean if there is weeping onto the dressing.
- 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.
- 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.

Northern Health

185 Cooper Street, Epping 3076
35 Johnstone Street, Broadmeadows 3047

Tel: 03 8405 8000

www.nh.org.au

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.
- **Please note that The Northern Hospital does NOT have a permanent ENT doctor present on site. Please do NOT return to our Emergency Department if you need urgent care, as we will need to transfer you elsewhere for care. Suitable alternatives include The Austin Hospital, Sunshine Hospital or Royal Children's Hospital (children only).**

Follow-Up

- Your ENT Surgeon will make an appointment to see you about one - two weeks after your operation. The nursing staff will give you this appointment before you are discharged from hospital.
- Any stitches need to be removed 1-2 weeks after your surgeon. If there is a delay in your appointment please clarify if you need to see your family doctor to have these removed.

Contact Details:

Northern Hospital Outpatient Department: (03) 8405 8335

Medical Advice (for emergencies only, please):

- Mon-Fri 8am-4pm: (03) 8405 8000, ask for the 'ENT Registrar On Call'
- After hours: Austin Health (03) 9496 5000, ask for the 'ENT Registrar On Call'

Northern Health

**185 Cooper Street, Epping 3076
35 Johnstone Street, Broadmeadows 3047**

Tel: 03 8405 8000

www.nh.org.au