

Glossectomy

Glossectomy is a surgery to remove disease from the tongue. This handout will review the types of surgery and your care after surgery.

Types of Glossectomy

- **Partial glossectomy** that removes less than half of the tongue.
- **Total glossectomy** that removes nearly all or most of the tongue.

We may need to repair your tongue with tissue from another part of your body. This tissue is called a flap or a skin graft.

What to Expect After Surgery

Diet

You may have trouble eating and drinking. Your doctor may place a small feeding tube in your nose during surgery. This will be taken out when you can eat and drink by mouth. If you have trouble swallowing, you may need to work with a swallow therapist.

Oral Care

If you had a skin graft, you may have a dressing called a bolster dressing over the skin graft. This dressing is stitched in place. **Do not** try to remove it.

We may prescribe you a mouth wash to keep your mouth clean and prevent infection. Use this mouth wash as directed. Do not use over the counter mouth wash. After you eat, gently rinse your mouth with water to wash food away from the surgery stitches.

Pain Control

You will get a prescription for opioid pain medicine to use as needed. You may get a liquid medicine, so it is easier to swallow. If

you use opioid pain medicine, take a stool softener to prevent constipation.

Speech

Your speech may sound different or it may be hard to talk. This will depend on how much of your tongue was removed and how much swelling you have. You may need to see a speech therapist.

Activities

- **No** strenuous exercise for the first week.
- Resume activities slowly over the next few weeks.
- **Do not** lift anything over 25 lbs for the first 2 weeks.

When to Call

- Increased pain in tongue, neck or face
- A fever over 100.5° or higher for 2 readings 4 hours apart
- Changes in the way your breath smells or mouth tastes
- Pus like drainage from the incision
- Change in color of tongue tissue

Who to Call

Otolaryngology (ENT) Clinic
Monday –Friday, 8 am-5 pm
(608) 263-6190

After hours and on weekends, the phone is answered by the paging operator. Ask for the ENT doctor on call. Leave your name and phone number with area code and the doctor will call you back.

The toll-free number is **1-800-323-8942**.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 12/2020 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF#7557