Your Care at Home After Stapedectomy

You are scheduled for surgery that may improve your hearing. One of the middle ear hearing bones (stapes) may have spongy bone formed around it (otosclerosis). Otosclerosis can cause decreased movement of the bone and hearing loss. Stapedectomy is a surgery that removes all or part of the stapes. A type of prosthesis will replace it.

What to Expect After Surgery

Hearing
Your hearing is likely to be worse right after surgery because of dressings, packing, or swelling. You may not notice progress for several weeks. Your surgeon will let you know when to have your hearing rechecked.

As your hearing returns, sounds may seem loud for a few weeks. You may also hear some popping or crackling noises. This is normal. You may notice some changes in taste when eating. This may last up to 3 months or longer.

Dizziness
You may be dizzy right after surgery. This is normal and will decrease over a few days. Severe dizziness or vertigo right after surgery or dizziness that lasts more than 48–72 hours is not common. Call the clinic if you notice those symptoms.

Ear Drainage
You may notice drainage from your ear. The drainage may be yellow, brown, red, or orange. You may see some fragments of gel foam packing. Dissolvable packing may look dark red or black on your cotton ball. Large amounts or constant ear or nasal drainage could be concerning. Call the clinic if you notice those symptoms.

Site Care
You will have a cotton ball in the bowl of your ear. This may be held in place by a Band-Aid®. You will have packing inside your ear canal. The packing may dissolve, or it will be removed at your first follow-up visit. **Do not try to remove the packing yourself.**

The cotton ball in your ear should be changed the day after surgery. It should then be changed daily or as often as needed until the drainage has stopped. You do not need to keep using the cotton ball if you do not have drainage from your ear.

For 2 days after surgery, keep your head raised at least 30 degrees when laying down. The best way to do this is by using at least 2 pillows to raise your head.

Dry Ear Precautions
Keep water out of your ear until advised by your doctor. **No swimming.** When you shower, use a petroleum jelly (Vaseline®) covered cotton ball in the bowl of your ear to seal the canal and keep it dry. Remove the Vaseline covered cotton ball after your shower and replace it with a dry cotton ball if you are still having ear drainage.

Pain
You may have some pain. Because your jaw is close to your ear, you may have soreness or stiffness when moving your jaw. This will get better over time. If you have soreness in your jaw, you may find it easier to eat soft foods.

Medicine
Use your pain medicine as directed for relief. You will be given a prescription for opioid pain medicine to use after surgery. Use this if needed. You can also use Tylenol® (acetaminophen) or a NSAID such as ibuprofen, Advil®, Motrin®, Aleve®, or naproxen.

Use a stool softener if you are taking an opioid pain medicine. Do not drive or drink alcohol while taking opioids.

You may be prescribed ear drops. Use these as directed until you come back for your first follow-up clinic visit.

Activity Restrictions
- **Avoid** strenuous exercise or sports for 2 weeks or as long as your doctor advises.
- **Avoid** quick head movements.
- **Do not** lift more than 10 pounds for 2 weeks.
- **Do not** blow your nose for 1 week after surgery. After that, you may blow your nose gently to avoid pressure on your ears. Sneeze with your mouth open.
- **Avoid ear popping/pressure**
- **Avoid** air travel for 4-6 weeks to avoid pressure changes in your ear. If that is not possible, check with your doctor.

When to Call
Call the clinic if you notice:
- Excessive bleeding (bleeding that soaks the cotton ball in 10 minutes or less and lasts for one hour).
- Fever greater than 100.5° F.
- Dizziness lasting more than 48 hours, sudden dizziness, or feeling that the room is spinning.
- Major hearing loss.
- Any increased swelling, redness, pain, or warmth around the ear.

Who to Call
If you have questions, please contact your provider through MyChart or call your provider listed in your After Visit Summary or After Hospital Care Plan. For a list of UW Health Clinics, please visit www.uwhealth.org/.

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 © 6/2026. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#5318.