

Acoustic Neuroma (Vestibular Schwannoma) Surgery

An acoustic neuroma (vestibular schwannoma) is a benign (not cancer) growth starting on the hearing and balance nerve near the inner ear and brain. It can press against the nerve, causing hearing loss, ringing in the ear (tinnitus), or balance problems. Larger tumors can be life threatening due to pressing on the brainstem. Surgery is one treatment option.

What to Expect After Surgery

You will have a large dressing over the incision. It will cover your ear and wrap around your head. The dressing may be removed in 2-3 days.

Facial weakness or drooping: This may occur on the affected side and should go away. It may not go away until after you return home.

Eye irritation: This may occur with facial weakness. Artificial tears or lubricants may be prescribed for eye care.

Pain: You may have headache, pain, numbness or tingling around the incision.

Dizziness and balance: Any dizziness or balance issues should improve over 4 to 6 weeks, although it may last longer.

Fatigue: You may have fatigue and emotional lows for several weeks or months.

Fat graft: You may have a small incision in the abdomen if you need a fat graft.

Pain Relief

Use the pain medicine prescribed for you. When your pain improves you may use Tylenol® (acetaminophen). Follow the directions on the label. You may start

ibuprofen or Aleve® 7 days after surgery. Follow package directions.

Activity

- For the next 7 days, keep your head raised 30 degrees by using 2-3 pillows to prop your head up when you lie down. Do not lie on the treated side.
- Do not bend over so your head is lower than the rest of your body for 2 weeks.
- Keep your mouth open while coughing or sneezing for at least 1 week.
- No intense physical exercise or lifting more than 10 pounds for 2 weeks or as advised by your doctor.
- No air travel for 4 weeks.
- Do not blow your nose for 2 weeks.
- Do not hold back a sneeze and sneeze with your mouth open.
- Avoid straining during a bowel movement. Use the prescribed stool softeners to avoid constipation.
- Do not drive for 2 weeks or until your doctor tells you that you can. Do not drive while taking prescription pain medicine.
- Avoid falling risks until your balance has improved. Avoid heights, such as climbing ladders for 4 weeks.
- Do not drink alcohol while taking prescription pain medicine.
- Slowly resume your daily routines at home, but no strenuous activity. A short walk with someone else is a good way to get exercise and help improve your balance.
- You may return to work when your doctor says it is okay. This may be in

about 4-6 weeks. It will depend on the type of work you do.

Diet

- Drink plenty of liquids, but avoid those with caffeine, such as coffee, tea and cola.
- Eating soft foods may be easier at first.
- You may need to increase the fiber in your diet since prescription pain pills can cause constipation. Many fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grain breads and cereals have high fiber content. Prunes and prune juice often help with constipation.

Incision Care

Check your incision daily for signs of infection.

- Increased redness
- Tenderness
- Swelling
- Pus-like drainage
- Warmth at the incision site
- Fever of 100°F or higher

You will be told before leaving the hospital if any other incision care is needed. Stitches may be dissolvable or will be removed at your first clinic follow up visit.

Bathing

You may get your incision wet 4 days after surgery. It is okay to use shampoo and conditioner.

When to Call

- Any signs of infection
- Any clear fluid leaking from your nose, ear or incision, or salty-tasting fluid that leaks down the back of your throat
- Pain not relieved by pain medicine
- Sudden, severe dizziness or nausea, or a sudden, severe headache
- New or increased weakness or drooping of the face
- Excess fatigue or change in mental status
- Changes in vision or increased sensitivity to light

Who to Call

ENT Clinic

Monday - Friday, 8 am - 5 pm

(608) 263-6190

After 5:00 pm or weekends, and holidays, the clinic number will be answered by the paging operator. Ask for the ENT doctor on-call. Leave your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back shortly.

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 © 3/2024 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#5631