

Home Care After Sympathectomy

What is a sympathectomy?

This is a procedure that destroys the nerve supply to sweat glands in the armpits and palms.

During surgery, the surgeon will make 2-3 small incisions (cuts) below your underarm on both sides of your chest. The surgeon will use a small camera and tools to cut or clamp the nerve. When done, the surgeon removes the camera and tools and closes the incision sites.

This handout tells you how to care for yourself at home. Your nurse will go over this with you. If you have any questions, please let us know.

Activity

- This is an outpatient procedure, meaning you will be able to go home after it is done.
- Have someone drive you home after the procedure.
- Do not lift more than 10 pounds (gallon of milk) for 4-5 days after surgery.

Wound Care

You have two sutures on either side of your body. These will be removed at your follow-up visit. The other incisions have sutures that will be absorbed by your body.

1. Keep all dressings clean and dry.
2. Do not soak your incisions in water. Do not swim or sit in a bathtub or hot tub until incisions are fully healed. This takes about 2 weeks.
3. You may have paper-like strips (Steri-strips) on your upper incisions. Do not remove these. They will peel off by themselves in 3-5 days or will be removed at your follow up visit.

Pain Control

Use the medicine prescribed by your doctor. Often, your doctor will prescribe Tylenol® 650-1000 mg every 6 hours or ibuprofen® 800 mg every 8 hours.

When you take Tylenol®, Make sure you do not take more than 4000 mg (4 grams) in 24 hours.

When you take ibuprofen®, make sure you take it with a full stomach for no more than 7 days. Call your doctor at once if you have symptoms of bleeding in your stomach or intestines. This includes black, bloody, or tarry stools, or coughing up blood or vomit that looks like coffee grounds.

Avoid aspirin unless told otherwise by your doctor. Aspirin can increase bleeding.

When to Call Your Doctor

- Pain that is not controlled with your pain pills.
- Any sign of infection:
 - Incisions that are red or warm to the touch
 - Pus-like drainage from incision or chest tube sites
 - Temperature greater than 101.5° F (by mouth), for two readings, 4 hours apart
- A large amount of swelling, bleeding, or bruising at the incision or chest tube sites.

Phone Numbers

Monday-Friday 8:00 am to 4:30 pm: Call the Thoracic surgery clinic at **(608) 263-7502**.

If you live out of the area, please call toll free: **1-800-323-8942**.

After hours, weekends and holidays - Call the paging operator at **(608) 262-2122**. Ask to speak with the cardiothoracic resident or fellow. Leave your name and phone number, the doctor will call you back.

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

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 © 7/2019 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#6313