

Sentinel Lymph Node Surgery

You have many lymph nodes in several places in your body. They help fight infection and disease. Cancer cells may travel to the lymph nodes. The **sentinel lymph node(s)** are the first lymph node(s) that cancer cells may spread to.

You are scheduled for a sentinel lymph node removal surgery. Your surgeon will remove the sentinel lymph node(s) to check if cancer has spread. You will have 1-3 sentinel lymph nodes removed.

Before Your Surgery

You will have a **lymphoscintigraphy** done. This test will trace the path of drainage from a tumor to the sentinel lymph node(s) to help the surgeon find the sentinel lymph nodes. You will have this test the same day or the day before your surgery.

Lymphoscintigraphy

You will be taken to Nuclear Medicine for this test. You will be awake for this test. You may have ice put on your skin to numb the skin around the tumor site. Then, you will receive an injection of a radioactive tracer. You will have images taken to trace the path of the radioactive tracer to the sentinel lymph nodes.

During the Surgery

The lymph node removal will be done in the operating room after the lymphoscintigraphy is done. Your surgeon may inject a blue dye around your cancer. This also helps to find the lymph nodes that need to be removed. The surgeon will remove the lymph nodes through an incision. Your incision will be closed with stitches that dissolve or need to be removed. You may also have surgical glue or tapes (steri-strips). You will have a bandage over the surgery incision.

After Your Surgery

- You can remove your surgery bandage 24 hours after surgery. Leave the steri-strips on until your first clinic visit. It is okay if they fall off before your clinic visit.
- Wait 24 hours before getting the surgery incision(s) wet.
- Wash the incisions gently with soap and water and pat dry.
- If you have steri-strips leave them in place. It is okay if they get wet in the shower.
- Your urine may be blue green in color if a blue dye was used.

When to Call

- Bleeding that soaks the gauze dressing in 10 minutes or less and keeps soaking dressings for 1 hour
- Pain not relieved by pain medicine
- Any signs of infection:
 - Spreading redness
 - Swelling
 - Pus-like drainage
 - Warmth at the incision site
 - Fever over 100.5°F for 2 readings, taken 4 hours apart

Who to Call

ENT Clinic
Weekdays, 8 am-5 pm
(608) 263-6190

Afterhours, weekends and holidays, your call will be sent to the paging operator. Ask for the ENT doctor on call. Leave your name and phone number with area code. The doctor will call you back.

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

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 © 8/2021. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7312.