Home Care after Carotid Artery Surgery

Daily Wound Care at Home

Caring for the Incision:
- You will have sutures under the skin on your neck that will dissolve. There will also be paper tape strips (steri-strips) over the incision. Do not remove these strips without your doctor’s permission. These will loosen and fall off 10 to 14 days after surgery.
- Do not apply any creams, lotions or powders to the incision site.

Taking a Shower:
- You may shower and use a mild soap on the incision the second day after surgery. Gently wash around your incision and rinse thoroughly with water. Pat the incision dry.
- Do not take tub baths, use hot tubs or go swimming until your incisions are healed.
- You may shower and wash your hair.

General Care
- **Check your incision every day** for redness, swelling or drainage. It is normal for you to have some bruising, tenderness, tingling and some swelling around your incision line.
- **Do not smoke or use tobacco products.**
- Talk with your doctor about how to manage your cholesterol and blood pressure. Medicines used with a low salt and lower fat diet may be prescribed for your health.

Learn more about your health care.
Activity:
- Do not drive for two weeks or until you are able to move your head freely. Do not drive if you are taking narcotic pain medicine.
- Do not do any strenuous activity for two weeks after surgery. After two weeks, you may slowly resume your regular activities.
- As you recover, talk with your doctor about your exercise levels. It is recommended for most healthy adults to get moderate exercise most days of the week (at least 150 minutes weekly).
- **Do not be afraid to move your head and neck.** Gently move your head side to side, chin to chest, and ear to shoulder to help prevent muscle tension headaches.

Diet:
- Eat foods high in protein for wound healing. You may resume your usual diet unless instructed to follow a special diet while in the hospital. For more information, read the handout on [Nutrition and Wound Healing](#).
- If you are diabetic, or have high blood sugar, a diabetic meal plan may be recommended. For more information, read the handouts [High Blood Sugar](#) and [Nutrition Guideline for Diabetes](#).

Medicines:
- Pain medicines will be ordered for discharge. Plan the amount of pain medicine you need 2 to 3 days in advance, in case you need a refill.
- Pain medicines can cause constipation. Stool softeners or laxatives may be prescribed. Do not strain with bowel movements.

When to Call the Doctor
If you have any of these signs, call your doctor at *(614) 293-8536.*
- Fever of 100.5 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius.
- Increase in redness, pain, swelling, change in color, odor or drainage from your incision site.
- **Bleeding at the incision site-apply pressure directly.** Call 911 for ambulance transport to nearest emergency department.
• Signs of blood clot, such as hardness, redness, numbness, tingling or swelling from your groin area to your foot. If your skin feels cold, or looks bluish in color, call your doctor right away.

• Problems talking or swallowing.

• Problems breathing.

• A loss of vision in one eye or problems with your vision.

• If you have a headache unrelieved with your normal headache medication such as Tylenol or aspirin, please notify our office.

• If you need a refill on your pain medicine, call the office 48 hours before taking your last pill. Some pain medicines require a written prescription and cannot be called into a pharmacy.

• Call the office if you have any questions or concerns about your healing.

Follow-Up Visit

Your follow up visit will be written in your paperwork when leaving the hospital. If you do not see a follow up visit with your vascular surgeon, please call the office at (614) 293-8536 to schedule the visit.

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.