Craniotomy Discharge Instructions

Your sutures or staples need to stay in place for at least 10 days after surgery.
To have them removed you can:

- Call your surgeon’s office (the number is on your discharge paperwork) to schedule a time, or
- Call your primary care doctor at least 10 days after surgery, if approved by your surgeon, to have them taken out.

Medicines

- If you are taking aspirin or other blood thinners, you must talk to your surgeon about when to restart these medicines.
- If you have a stent, take your aspirin to prevent blood clots.
- Unless approved by your surgeon, do not take any non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, called NSAIDS. These medicines include ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil), arthritis medicines such as Celebrex, or naproxen (Aleve) for at least _____________ weeks after surgery.

Activity

To protect your health, follow these guidelines:

- For 2 weeks after surgery, keep your head elevated to prevent swelling. Use extra pillows while sleeping and do not lie flat.
• Walk as you are able. Start with short distances and work up to longer times standing and walking. Tell your surgeon about your progress at your follow-up visit.

• Use the hand railing for support when going up and down stairs.

• It is normal for your energy level and sleep patterns to change after surgery. These things slowly return to normal as you start your usual activities. Get extra sleep at night and naps during the day while you heal. Remember, everyone’s recovery is different, so don’t get discouraged.

• You may do light housework, such as dusting, but not vacuuming. **Limit lifting, pushing or pulling to 5 pounds or less.** This is about one ½ gallon of milk. A gallon weighs 8 pounds and will be too heavy.

• Do not do any activity or exercise that makes you sweat or bend over so that your head is lower than your heart.

• Do not drive or operate power tools or machinery until approved by your surgeon.

• For one month following surgery, do not sit in a car for more than 45 minutes. If you take a longer trip longer than 60 minutes, stop every hour and get out and walk for a few minutes.

• **Avoid all tub baths, hot tubs and swimming pools until your surgeon has given approval to soak the incision in water.**

• Your surgeon will instruct you when it is safe to return to work.

**Incision Care**

• **Check your incision every day for redness or drainage.** It is normal to have some bruising, swelling and tenderness around the incision.

• **NEVER leave a wet or dirty dressing on your incision.** If your incision is damp or dirty it can delay healing or lead to infection.

• Protect your incision by:
  ▶ Cleaning the area around the wound and put on a new dressing.
  ▶ Taking a shower if it has been 3 or more days after surgery. Do not take a tub bath. Dry the wound completely.

• **Do not scratch** or pick at the incision as it heals.
• **Do not apply** any of these products to the wound unless told to do so by your surgeon:
  - Lotions, creams  
  - Ointment such as Neosporin  
  - Alcohol  
  - Hydrogen peroxide  
  - Powder  
  - Sunscreen

• Protect your wound from sun exposure and avoid all sun if possible. If you do go out in the sun, wear a very loose fitting hat or scarf and immediately remove it when you are inside.

• Do not drink any alcoholic beverages until approved by your surgeon.

• Tobacco use delays healing. If you need help with quitting tobacco, please talk with your doctor.

**Showering**

• **For the first 2 days or 48 hours after surgery**, do sponge baths. Avoid getting the incision and dressing wet. For example, if you had your surgery on Monday, do only sponge baths until Wednesday.

• **48 hours after surgery:**
  - If you are sent home with a dressing, you may now remove your dressing. Your wound may be left open to the air after that.
  - You may take a shower and wash your hair. **Do not take a tub bath.** Use baby shampoo and gently wash your hair and the incision. Then rinse it well with water.
  - When drying off, use a clean towel. Very gently pat the wound dry. Do not rub with a towel. It is also okay to let the wound air dry.

• If your wound was closed with sutures or staples, they need to be removed in 10 days.

• If your wound was closed with special glue called Dermabond that is thin and purple instead of sutures, shower and clean the area with Dermabond in place. **Do not remove the Dermabond.** It will remain in place for about 10 days and then wear off by itself.

• You can use a hair dryer on the lowest, coolest setting to help dry your incision after showering. **Do not use on a high heat setting.**
When to Call Your Surgeon’s Office

If you have one or more of these signs call your surgeon’s office. The phone number will be on your discharge instructions when leaving the hospital:

- Temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or greater (38 degrees Celsius).
- Drainage from your incision
- Skin around the incision becomes red, warm, swollen or painful
- Feeling any fluid dripping from your nose or your ears
- Leg swelling or tenderness or pain in the leg

When to Go to the Emergency Department

If you have any of these signs go to the nearest emergency department or call 911 right away:

- Any change in alertness; feel more sleepy than usual or feel restless or confused
- Breathing problems
- Chest pain
- Vision problems or a change in vision.
- New problems with weakness, numbness, or inability to move an arm or leg, balance or walking. Problems may be only on one side of the body.
- Changes in face appearance, such as drooping on one side of the face
- Not able to speak or problems when talking, or trouble swallowing
- Seizures
- Nausea and vomiting that continues or gets worse
- Severe headache or headache with a stiff neck

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