

Post operative care instructions after Major Ear Surgery

The following instructions will help you know what to expect in the days following surgery. However, do not hesitate to call if you have any questions or concerns. Dr Anderson can be contacted on # for post operative questions only. If you are unable to contact Dr Anderson leave a message. If you are worried or if it is an emergency go to the Townsville Hospital Emergency Department to be assessed by the Emergency doctors. If Dr Anderson is not available a ENT doctor is always on call at the Townsville Hospital.

Post operative wound care

Head wrap

If you have a head wrap on this will be removed the morning after surgery to inspect the wound. This will be re wrapped by the nursing staff and you will be given some supplies. Generally, the surgical wound will be covered in glue. This will feel crusty if you touch it. When you leave hospital please leave the dressing on for 48 hours. If it falls off re-wrap it. You can take it off after 48 hours and then just wear it at night time to prevent accidental pulling of the ear forward. The dressing should be firm but not so tight as to cause injury.

Packing

You will typically have an ear that is filled with a antimicrobial cream and 1-2 packs in the outer ear. Sometimes this pack will be stitched together with a black string so you can remove it yourself if you live out of town. Once you get home after the head wrap comes off start using the drops prescribed to keep the pack moist. Most of the drops will not penetrate the ear canal. Continue these drops twice a day until you see Dr Anderson. If the packs fall out don't be concerned just continue the drops.

What should I expect after surgery?

Pain

Usual pain is not severe but with the dressing the ear may throb. Keep your head elevated to minimize swelling. A recliner works well, or adding an extra pillow on your bed is adequate. Usually once the head wrap comes off this settles. Mild pain can be treated with paracetamol and ibuprofen. Occasionally, stronger pain relief may be required. There may be occasional fleeting, stabbing pain in the ear up to one week after surgery. Analgesics will be prescribed, if they are necessary. Let Dr Anderson know if your pain is getting progressively worse.

Swelling

Swelling after any incision is common. Sometimes your ear will protrude as a result. it should subside over a period of several weeks. It may also be noticed that there is some numbness over the top of the ear after the bandages have been removed. This is the result of bruising of the sensory nerves to the ear as a result of the incision. This numbness will gradually subside over a period of several months.

Dizziness

The hearing organ and balance organ are all part of the inner ear system. While unusual some patients may experience this in varying severity after surgery. The vast majority is minor and recovers with resumption of normal activity. While you recover if you are experiencing dizziness it is important that you don't fall. Take care with steps and in the shower. Its best that if you experience this that a family member or friend stays with you to help you. **YOU CANNOT DRIVE IF YOU FEEL DIZZY.**

Hearing

Hearing is not assessed until 3 months after surgery. Before this time, you will notice crackling and popping in your ear. You will notice your hearing fluctuate during this time, as the dissolvable packing in your middle ear and outer ear clears.

Discharge and smell from the ear.

Your ear will be packed with antibiotic cream that will come out as you use the drops this is normal.

Common Questions

Can I wear my glasses?

You may wear your glasses, but they should be taped up, so they don't rest on the incision.

When can I return to Exercise?

Avoid extreme physical activity, including athletic activities. You may resume light walking three days after surgery. Aerobic exercise, weight training, heavy lifting, and straining may be gradually resumed two weeks after surgery.

When can I get the ear wet?

Please avoid direct water exposure to the ear canal until you see Dr Anderson. Usually Dr Anderson allows return to unrestricted swimming 4 weeks after surgery. You can use a wet clean towel to clean the external ear canal of crusting and any dried blood. If you have an incision behind the ear this is covered in Glue that may feel crusty. You can wash your hair with care not to get this area wet for 1 week. Be careful not to bend the ear forward.

When can I drive?

You can return to driving once you have not required oxycodone for 24 hours and you have no imbalance and can look left and right quickly without feeling dizzy.

What if I sneeze?

Do not blow your nose for at least two weeks from the day of surgery. Blowing can build excessive pressure in the operated ear and displace the reconstructed or grafted eardrum. If you feel you are getting a cold start using a nasal decongestant for a short period to help this. If you have to sneeze, please do it with your mouth wide open to avoid pressure build up in your ear.

Call immediately if you experience any of the following:

- If you notice any weakness of the face.
- If the dizziness becomes very severe.
- If you experience any sensitivity to light associated with severe headaches and fever.
- Redness in the incision behind your ear that is spreading.