

Radical or Functional Neck Dissection

Valley Regional Hospital

My surgery is on:

Date: _____

Time: _____

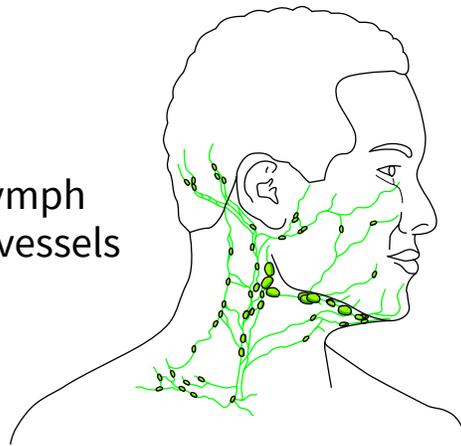
Radical or Functional Neck Dissection

This pamphlet will help you learn about your surgery. If you have any questions, please ask a member of your health care team. We are here to help you.

Types of surgery

- **Radical neck dissection:** This involves removing all cysts (lumps), lymph nodes, muscles, nerves, and blood vessels on the affected side of the neck.
- **Functional neck dissection:** This involves removing all the lymph nodes on the affected side of the neck, but not the muscles, nerves, or blood vessels. This keeps more of your shoulder and neck function (ability to use your shoulder and neck).

Chains of lymph nodes and vessels in the neck



- A pathologist (doctor who finds and identifies diseases) will study a piece of your tissue under a microscope in the lab. Your doctor will share the results with you as soon as possible and talk with you about any other treatment you may need.

Getting ready for surgery

- You may need tests before your surgery. This will depend on your general health and the type of surgery you are having. Staff will contact you to arrange for testing before surgery, if needed.
- **Plan to have a responsible adult drive you home and stay with you the first 48 hours (2 days) after your surgery.** This is for your safety.
- If you take medication, please talk with your surgeon before your surgery. They will tell you which medications to take before your surgery with a sip of water, and which ones to stop taking.
- Stock up on fluids like water, juice, Gatorade® or Powerade®, milkshakes, and soups.
- Have acetaminophen (Tylenol®) on hand.

Medications

For 14 days (2 weeks) before your surgery:

- **Do not** take any natural or herbal medications or products. These may cause more bleeding.



For 10 days before your surgery:

- **Do not** take ASA (acetylsalicylic acid, Aspirin®).

For 7 days (1 week) before your surgery:

- **Do not** take ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®).

It is OK to take acetaminophen (Tylenol®).

The night before your surgery

- **Do not** eat or drink anything after midnight the night before surgery.



The morning of your surgery

- You may take your medications as told by your surgeon with sips of water.
- You may brush your teeth.
- Follow any directions you were given at the Pre-Admissions Clinic (if you had an appointment there).
- Take off all make-up and jewelry before coming to the hospital.
- If you have long hair, pull it back with an elastic.
- We recommend that your face is clean shaven.
- Nova Scotia Health is smoke-free and scent-free. Please respect this policy. **Do not** use scented products (like perfume, after shave, scented hair spray).

Tell your surgeon if you:

- › Become sick (have diarrhea [loose, watery poop], vomiting [throwing up], nausea [upset stomach]) before your surgery
 - › Have a cough, cold, or fever (temperature above 38 °C or 100.4 °F)
- Give yourself plenty of time to find parking.

Bring with you on the day of your surgery:

- Provincial health (MSI) card
- Private medical insurance card (if you have one)
- All of your medications (including prescription and over-the-counter products, inhalers, creams, eye drops, patches, herbal products, vitamins, and supplements) in their original containers
- CPAP machine (if you use one)
- A container or bag for the ride home in case you vomit

My appointment

- **Your surgery may be cancelled if you are late.**
- **If you are not able to keep your appointment, call the booking office as soon as possible:**
 - › Phone: 902-679-2657, extension 2401
- Arrive 2 hours before your scheduled surgery time or at the time your surgeon's office told you.
 - › If your surgery is scheduled for 8 a.m., please arrive by 6:15 a.m.
- **Go through the main entrance and register at Central Registration.**
- Delays in the O.R. may cause a change in your surgery time. There is a chance that your surgery may be cancelled if there is an emergency. If this happens, your surgeon's office will call you to arrange a new date.

Right before surgery

- You will be taken to the O.R. and helped onto a table.
- The anesthesiologist (a doctor who puts you to sleep for your surgery) will put an intravenous (I.V.) in your arm. They will give you anesthetic (medication to put you to sleep during surgery) through the I.V.

After surgery

- You will wake up in the Post-Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU). This is a recovery area.
- The head of your bed will be kept raised up at 30 degrees.
- You will have an incision (cut) on the affected side of your neck.
- You may have a drain in your neck to remove any blood coming from under the incision. This drain is usually taken out 48 to 72 hours (2 to 3 days) after surgery.
- When you go back to your hospital room, a nurse will check your incision, blood pressure, pulse, and temperature. They will do this every 4 hours for 24 hours (1 day), if you stay overnight in the hospital.
- You will have swelling. This will go away on its own.

- You may have weakness in your shoulder on the affected side if those muscles and nerves were removed. Your body may feel tired or weak after surgery. This is normal. A physiotherapist will give you a list of exercises to help with this, if needed.
- You will have numbness around the incision, your upper face, and your ear lobe. This may be temporary or permanent.
- If you have discomfort, ask your nurse for pain medication.
- If you have nausea, ask your nurse for medication.
- Take deep breaths and cough every hour you are awake. This will help to keep your lungs clear. A nurse will talk with you about this.
- You will be able to eat and drink after your surgery. It may be hard to eat as usual at first.
- If your doctor has not ordered I.V. medication, your I.V. will be taken out when you are drinking well and do not have nausea.
- **Do not** get up for the first time on your own. Ring for the nurse to help you. You may still be drowsy.
 - › You will be able to get out of bed by yourself when you are no longer drowsy.
 - › When moving from lying down to sitting up, put your hands together behind your head. This will help to support your head and protect your neck muscles from strain.

After you leave the hospital

Safety

- **You must have a support person drive you when you leave the hospital.**
- You must have a responsible adult with you when you leave the hospital. **You cannot leave the hospital alone.**

At home

Incision

- We will show you how to care for your incision before you leave the hospital.
- If you have Steri-Strips®, these usually fall off in 7 days (1 week). If you do not have Steri-Strips®, you can start cleaning your incision 1 to 2 days after your surgery.
- **To clean your incision:**
 - › Wet a cotton swab with hydrogen peroxide.
 - › Move the swab over the incision in a rolling motion to remove any crusting.
 - › Put an antibiotic ointment (like Polysporin®) on the incision after each cleaning for the first 7 days.
- Clean the site 2 times a day for 7 days. This will help it heal and lower scarring.
- **Do not** peel or pick any scabs. Let them fall off on their own.
- **After 7 days**, use soapy water or saline (salt water) instead of hydrogen peroxide.
- Put Vaseline® or CytoDerma™ Advanced Scar Gel on the incision after each cleaning. Using Polysporin® for too long can cause problems with wound healing.
- You may have a waterproof dressing over your incision. Leave the dressing on for 48 hours, then take it off and follow the instructions above to clean your incision.
- If you have staples or stitches that were not taken out before you left the hospital:
 - › They will be taken out at your follow-up appointment.
- **or**
 - › You may be told to have them removed by your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner).

Activity

- **Do not** strain or lift anything heavier than 20 pounds unless your doctor says it is OK. This includes lifting children.
- You can go back to your regular activities usually after 7 days, or as told by your doctor.
- You can go back to having sex usually after 7 days, or when you feel well enough.
- Rest when you are tired.
- Ask your doctor when you can start driving again. This is usually 7 to 14 days after surgery.
- Ask your doctor when you can go back to work or school. This is usually 7 to 14 days after surgery.

Managing pain

- You will get a prescription for pain medication before you leave the hospital.
- **To manage pain during the first few days after surgery, you can also take:**
 - › 325 to 975 mg of acetaminophen (Tylenol®) every 4 hours, up to 4 grams (4000 mg) a day
 - and**
 - › 200 to 400 mg of ibuprofen (Advil®) every 6 hours, as needed
- **Do not** drink alcohol while taking pain medication.
- You may be prescribed an antibiotic. Use as directed.



Shoulder and neck exercises

- Keep doing your shoulder and neck exercises as told by your physiotherapist. This will help to keep your shoulders and neck working as well as possible.

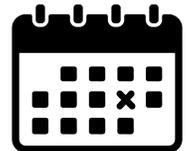
Call your doctor if you have any of these signs of infection:

- › More swelling or redness at the surgery site (area where the surgery was done)
- › Fever (temperature above 38 °C or 100.4 °F)
- › More pain
- › Green or yellow drainage from the incision that smells bad

If you cannot reach your doctor, go to the nearest Emergency Department right away.

Follow-up

- You will get a follow-up appointment to see your surgeon. Keep all of your follow-up appointments.



This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find all patient education resources here:
www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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