



Patient & Family Guide
2015

Radical or Functional Neck Dissection



www.nshealth.ca

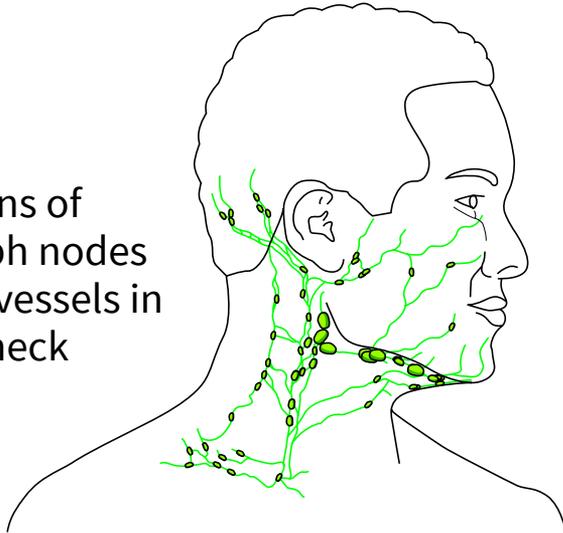
Radical or Functional Neck Dissection

This pamphlet will help you learn about your surgery. Staff members are always available to help you during your hospital stay.

A **radical neck dissection** involves the removal of all lymph nodes, muscles, nerves and blood vessels on the affected side of the neck.

A **functional neck dissection** removes all the lymph nodes and tries to spare the muscles, nerves and blood vessels. This preserves more of the shoulder and neck function.

Chains of lymph nodes and vessels in the neck



This pamphlet is just a guide.
If you have questions, please talk to your
healthcare provider. We are here to help you.

A sample of tissue will be studied by a pathologist under a microscope in the lab. Your doctor will share the report with you and your family as soon as possible. If you need further treatment, it will be discussed with you.

The operating room (OR)

You will be taken into the OR and helped onto a table. An intravenous (IV) needle will be put in your arm by the anesthesiologist who will give you the anesthetic (sleeping medication).

After surgery

- You will wake up in the PACU (recovery room). A nurse will check you often.
- When you return to your hospital room, a nurse will check your neck incision (cut), blood pressure, pulse and temperature. This will be done every 4 hours for 24 hours.
- The head of your bed will be kept raised up at 30 degrees.
- You will have an incision on the affected side of your neck.
- There will be drains in your neck to remove any blood coming from under the incision. This drain is usually taken out 48-72 hours after your operation.

- You will have swelling due to the fluid collecting from the removal of the lymph nodes. This will go away on its own.
- You may have weakness on the affected side of your shoulder if those muscles and nerves were removed. You will get a list of exercises from your physiotherapist if needed.
- There will be numbness around the incision, your upper face and ear lobe.
- You may have pain medication. Ask your nurse for medication if you are uncomfortable.
- If you are feeling sick to your stomach, ask your nurse for medication.
- You will be able to go back to a regular diet after surgery. You may have a bit of trouble eating at first.
- If the doctor has not ordered medication to go through your IV, your IV will be taken out when you are drinking well and are not feeling sick to your stomach.
- Ring for the nurse to help you get out of bed the first time. You may still be drowsy.
- You will be able to get up out of bed by yourself when the drowsiness wears off.
- You will be encouraged to take deep breaths and cough every hour to keep your lungs clear. A nurse will talk with you about this.

- To support your head, place your hands together behind your head when raising yourself to a sitting position. This will protect the neck muscles from strain.
- You must have family or a friend give you a drive home.

At home

Incision

- You will be taught how to care for your incision before you go home.
- Staples or stitches will be taken out at your follow-up appointment, if they were not removed before discharge. You may be told to have them removed by your family doctor.

Other

- You will get an appointment to see your surgeon for follow up.
- Ask your doctor when you can go back to work.
- You can resume sexual activity (sex) again when you feel well enough.
- Ask your doctor when you can start driving again.

Activity

- No heavy lifting or straining unless stated otherwise by your doctor. This includes lifting children.
- Resume normal activities as directed by your doctor.
- Rest when you are tired.

Discomfort

- You will get a prescription for pain medication when you leave the hospital.
- **Do not drink alcohol while taking pain pills.**

Shoulder and neck exercises

Continue with your exercises at home as told by the physiotherapist. These exercises will help you to keep your neck and shoulders working as well as possible.

Call your doctor if you have any increase in swelling, fever, or pain.

If you cannot contact your doctor, go to the nearest Emergency Department.

