

Neck Lift Postoperative Instructions

Pain Medication:

- Take 2x paracetamol tablets (Panamax, Panadol) every 6 hours regularly for the first 3-5 days.
- Take ibuprofen (nurofen or brufen) 400 mg with breakfast, lunch and dinner as required. Do not take ibuprofen on an empty stomach. Do not take ibuprofen if you have asthma, or known allergic reactions to non-steroidal anti-inflammatories such as aspirin, naproxen, naprosyn or feldene.
- For severe pain, take oxycodone (endone) tablets as instructed on the packet if required.
- Don't forget, sitting up and sleeping with extra pillows will decrease the swelling and thus the pain.
- If your pain is severe and not relieved by endone, please call the office or Dr Vrtik (if after hours).

Hygiene:

You may shower and shampoo your hair the day after surgery. You can wash the suture lines over your ears, hairline and chin, under running water and pat dry *very gently*. Keep all your sutures lines clean. Avoid using a hairbrush or comb close to the sutures, as they may snag and pull on the stitches. Some patients find it soothing to use a thin layer of Vaseline ointment on the stitches to protect it from sweat and prevent scabbing. Wear your garment at all times between showers.

Sleeping:

Sleep with your head elevated on at least 2-3 pillows for 7 days after surgery. Try to keep the pillow under your shoulders as well as your head, so that your chin isn't tucked down on your chest. You can flip from side to side, but don't spend all night on one side or else that side of your neck and face will be very puffy when you wake up in the morning. To ensure a good night sleep, ensure you take your pain medication prior to sleeping. It is not unusual to be particularly sleepy and tired after an operation or an anaesthetic. Take time to rest as needed.

Diet:

Recovering from anaesthesia is like recovering from the flu. Start with clear liquids; then advance to soft, non-spicy foods over the next 2 days. For two weeks after surgery, avoid foods that require excess chewing or mouth opening (e.g. un-cut apples, corn on the cob etc). It is not unusual to feel tightness in the neck after the surgery but it should not affect your swallowing.

Activity:

Remain reclined or seated, and quiet for the first 24 hours. Avoid bending, heavy lifting, pushing, pulling or straining for at least 4 weeks. You can move your head around in all directions – it won't tear anything out. There are no special stretching neck exercises, just what's within the comfortable range. You should be able to drive when you can turn and look over your shoulder comfortably so that you can change lanes safely. Start exercising at 25% of your normal level after 4 weeks, graduate your level progressively over the following 4 weeks.

Temperature:

A low-grade fever up to 37.5 degrees Celsius for 1-2 days is normal. Call the office if:

- Your temperature is 38 degrees Celsius or over.
- You feel feverish, chills, or unwell

Make-up:

At your first follow-up appointment, your wounds will be reviewed and your sutures will be removed. You will be able to apply makeup on your face if your wound has healed adequately. Often it can take up to 2-3 weeks before makeup is recommended over the suture lines.

Swelling:

Swelling reaches its peak at 48-72 hours after surgery. Some patients have swelling and bruising that tracks all the way down into the chest wall. Do not worry. This is normal. Use frozen peas in a small sandwich bag, or a folded up frozen face cloth. Apply this often to the lower face, and neck over the first 48 hours to decrease the amount of swelling. Wearing the garment will also minimise the swelling.

Follow-up:

Follow-up is usually 5-7 days after surgery for wound check and removal of sutures. Make sure you call the office to establish date and time if you have not already received your first post-operative appointment.

What to Expect after a Neck Lift:

- While the neck is swollen, the appearance of your lower face and neck may be very bloated and fat. DO NOT WORRY. This will improve as swelling subsides. MOST SWELLING AND BRUISING WILL PERSIST FOR AT LEAST SIX WEEKS, UP TO THREE MONTHS, SOMETIMES EVEN LONGER. THIS IS VERY COMMON. YOU MUST BE PATIENT TO ALLOW EVERYTHING TO HEAL AND SETTLE NATURALLY.
- Your skin will be irritated and sensitive after surgery. You should avoid the sun, and use a gentle cleanser and moisturiser. You should wash your face and neck twice a day and apply moisturiser. Our nurses will be able to recommend a suitable skin care range if you do not have any. Don't forget to also protect your face and neck from excess sun exposure with a scarf and sunscreen for 8 weeks.
- To prevent postoperative bleeding, do not cough excessively or blow your nose for 3 weeks after surgery. If you have to cough and sneeze, try to minimise the impact by allowing the air to escape via an open mouth.
- For a while after surgery, your neck is literally going to feel like a dead piece of wood. It will be numb, stiff and feel hard to touch. It may be bumpy or uneven in places and will take a few months before it starts to feel normal again. The nerves take time to link up and for the tissue to regain their normal suppleness. Sometimes, regular little massages after 4 weeks will help.
- When the nerve recovers, you may experience tingling, buzz, or electric shock sensation periodically in the neck. This is expected, and will disappear after a few months.
- The irregularities, pleats and puckers that are in your neck and around your ears will settle. They smooth out with time and massage, but can again take several months.
- The scars around the ear and chin may take up to 6-12 months to fully mature. If they become lumpy and pronounced, you will be asked to commence silicone gel therapy with regular massage for 3 months.
- Remember, surgery takes time to settle, and often at 3 months, you'll look very good, but you will not look your best yet! Often patients look better at 12 months than at 3 months after surgery.

Contact Telephone Numbers:

During Office Hours and Non-Urgent Matters – 3353 6165

After hours and for Emergencies only – 0421739149

