

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR NECK SURGERY
(Submandibular Gland Excision, Parotidectomy, Thyroidectomy,
Lymph Node Excisional Biopsy, Neck Dissection)

INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this sheet is to acquaint you with what you should and should not do following neck surgery. These instructions are based on experience and must be followed faithfully to assure a smooth recovery. Be sure that you and those who will be caring for you are familiar with these postoperative procedures. If you have any questions, please call Dr. Benke's office at (817) 641-3750.

ADVANCE PREPARATION:

Arrange for someone to care for you immediately following your surgery. You may still be groggy when you are released, so you will need a ride home and someone to remain with you for at least the first 24 hours. Since you cannot drive for 1-2 weeks, you will need transportation to and from your first office visit. You will have a follow-up visit at 6-7 days after surgery and then 4-5 weeks after surgery. Obtain the items that you will need for your postoperative home care: Q-tips, Hydrogen Peroxide, and Bacitracin ointment. Be sure that comfortable clothing is available for your recovery period—nothing that must go over your head. Make every effort to be well rested prior to surgery.

DAY OF SURGERY:

Wash your hair and face; wear comfortable clothing to the hospital (something that buttons up the front). Do not wear makeup or fingernail polish. When you are discharged from the hospital you will be given prescriptions for pain medicine, anti-nausea medication, and possibly antibiotics. Take these as directed. Start "at home" care on the first night (see reverse side).

AT HOME:

1. To help minimize swelling, pain and oozing, use pillows to elevate your head to a 45° level for the first night following surgery. For the next two weeks, an elevation of 30° is desirable. Sleep on your back for the first week.
2. If a rubber drain tube has been left in place with a bulky gauze dressing, keep the dressing clean and dry. This will be removed in the office 2-3 days after surgery. **Parotidectomy** patients spend one night in the hospital. **Thyroidectomy** patients typically spend 1-2 nights in the hospital until the drain is removed.
3. Once the drain/dressing has been removed, or if one was not placed at the time of surgery, keep the wound clean and dry. Do not remove steri-strips if they are in place. For exposed sutures or staples, clean them with hydrogen peroxide and apply a generous coating of Bacitracin ointment twice a day. Your sutures/staples will be removed in the office 6-7 days after surgery.
4. Expect some mild swelling, especially above the incision, for several weeks. For excessive swelling, redness, tenderness, or drainage, call the office immediately.
5. You should NOT shower until after the sutures/staples have been removed. **BATHE ONLY.** For men, shave around the wound. Keep the wound clean and dry.
6. A scar will be noticeable for several months; then it will begin to fade. After one month, you may gently massage the scar with facial cream and/or Mederma.
7. You should not drive for 1-2 weeks after surgery based on your level of pain/discomfort and need for pain medication. Avoid sudden neck turns or straining your neck during this time.
8. You can usually begin to eat and drink normally the evening after the procedure, but you may still be a little queasy from the anesthesia. Once the anesthesia has worn off and you're feeling up to it, you'll be able to get up and walk around.
9. Notify the office or answering service (if after hours) immediately if you have:
 - a) High fever (temp = 102°F or higher)
 - b) Excessive bleeding or swelling
 - c) Nausea and/or vomiting not controlled with anti-nausea medication (Phenergan/promethazine)
 - d) Pain not controlled with pain medication
10. Call Dr. Benke's office for any questions or concerns. Our office number is (817) 641-3750.