

Patient Education

Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery Center



Free Flap Grafts

A free flap is a procedure where tumor is replaced with normal soft tissue, muscle, skin, and/or bone. This is done to keep the area working as normally as possible.

The **radial forearm free flap** is taken from the underside of the non-dominant forearm. The skin, fatty tissue, and blood vessels are all taken for transplantation to the new site. These vessels are connected to vessels in the new site so that the flap has good blood flow. Your doctor will check the site often to make sure the blood supply is strong.

The donor site on your forearm will also need a thin layer of skin to cover it. This layer of skin will come from the top of your thigh.

After surgery, your forearm will have a cast and bulky dressing to protect it. This will be replaced with a dressing and splint 1 week after surgery. You and your caregivers will be shown how to take care of this area.

In a **fibular free flap**, a portion of bone is taken from the small bone in your lower leg. This will be used to replace any bone removed from your jaw. Your leg will have a cast on it for 4 days. Once the cast is removed, a physical therapist will work with you to get you walking. Sometimes a splint will be used to give support.

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Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns.

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