After Your Neurosurgery

Self-care at home

This handout gives self-care instructions for you to follow at home after your neurosurgery.

Pain Control

• You may go home with a short-term prescription for pain after surgery. Take this medicine only as instructed. If you need refills, talk with your primary care provider (PCP).

• For mild to moderate pain, you may take non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) or naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn). Follow dose instructions on the bottle.

Incision Care

• Your incision will be closed with staples or sutures (stitches). These will need to be removed 14 days after surgery. This can be done by your PCP or at the Neurosurgery Clinic.

• You will not need to put a bandage on your incision, unless your doctor or nurse tells you to.

• To help prevent infection, keep your incision dry:
  - For 5 days after surgery, cover your hair when you take a shower.
  - Do not go swimming or put your head under water until your incision is fully healed.

• Check your incision every day. Call the clinic if you have:
  - Signs of infection such as heat around your incision, bad-smelling drainage (pus), redness, or a fever higher than 101.5°F (38.6°C)
  - Swelling or fluid buildup
  - More drainage than usual

Activity

For 2 weeks after your surgery:

• Do not bend over at the waist. It is important not to put any pressure on your head.

Call one of the numbers listed on page 2 if you have any questions about self-care after surgery.
• **Do not** lift anything that weighs more than 10 pounds. (A gallon of milk weighs almost 9 pounds.)
• **Do not** strain when having a bowel movement.
• Avoid doing any activity that increases your heart rate. Walk often to speed your recovery.
• **Do not** use hair dye until your incision is fully healed.

**What to Expect**
After this surgery, it is normal to have:
• Numbness at your incision site. You may not regain full feeling for many months.
• Tenderness around your incision. This will last for several weeks.
• A dull headache. This will last for 1 to 2 weeks.

**When to Call**
Call the clinic if you have:
• Severe or unusual headache
• Nausea and vomiting
• Problems with balance or dizziness
• A hard time walking, or poor coordination
• Problems with your vision
• Loss of bowel or bladder control
• Personality changes, confusion, memory problems, or seizures

**Urgent Care**
**Call 911 right away** if you have symptoms of a stroke, such as:
• Weakness or loss of feeling
• Problems talking, walking, or seeing
• Severe headache that starts suddenly

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**Questions?**

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or other healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Weekdays 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., call Harborview Neurosurgery Clinic at 206.744.9340.

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206.744.2500.