

After Your Iliac Crest Free Flap

Self-care at home



An iliac crest free flap is one way to fill a hole in either the upper or lower jaw. It is often used to replace bone that has been removed for cancer treatment. This handout gives self-care instructions to follow at home after your surgery.

Diet

Before you leave the hospital, your health care provider will tell you what foods you can and cannot eat when you go home.

Wound Care

Neck Incision

Use a solution of half hydrogen peroxide and half saline to clean your neck incision 2 times a day.

After cleaning your neck incision, apply a light layer of Aquaphor ointment. Do not cover your incision. Keeping it open to the air will help it heal.

Hip Incision

Wash your hip incision with soap and water every day. Before you leave the hospital, you will learn more about how to care for your hip incision at home.

Physical Therapy

- Do **not** lift anything that weighs more than 10 to 15 pounds for 2 weeks after you leave the hospital.
- Keep doing the physical activity that your physical therapist prescribed during your hospital stay.
- Walking and physical activity will cause hip pain. This will improve over time.
- Your physical therapist may prescribe a walker for you to use at home.

Follow-up Visit

You will have a follow-up visit 1 week after you leave the hospital. This appointment will be in the Otolaryngology Clinic with a nurse practitioner. Your appointment will be set before you leave the hospital.



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this handout.

When to Call the Clinic

Call the Otolaryngology Clinic if you have:

- Fever higher than 100°F (37.8°C) or chills
- Any change in the area of your surgery:
 - Increased pain
 - Swelling
 - Bad smell
 - Draining fluid
- Any change in your neck or hip incisions:
 - Increased pain
 - Swelling
 - Redness
 - Draining fluid
 - Incision opens up

Medicine

When you leave the hospital, you may receive these prescriptions:

- **Pain medicine:** Take this medicine with food, as prescribed, to prevent nausea. Please see the handout you were given on pain medicines.
- **Low-dose aspirin (81 mg):** You will take 1 low-dose aspirin every day for 1 month. You can buy this medicine without a prescription at any drugstore. It will help keep a good blood supply flowing to your surgery site, and this will help with healing.
- **Antibiotics:** You may be advised to take antibiotics to prevent infection. Take them as prescribed.

Call the clinic if you have any problems with pain or with your medicines. Your nurse practitioner will talk with you about your medicines at your 1-week clinic visit.

To Prevent Constipation

- Take stool softeners. You can buy these without a prescription at any drugstore.
- Drink plenty of fluids.

Questions?

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

Otolaryngology/Head and Neck Surgery Center: 206.598.4022