Postoperative Instructions - Cochlear Implant Surgery

BEFORE SURGERY

• No blood thinners including Aspirin, Coumadin, Xarelto, Plavix, and Eliquis. (If this applies to you, please ask the prescribing Doctor when to stop and restart this medication in regards to your surgery. Please bring in a written and signed copy of the instructions from your Doctor regarding your blood thinner.)
• No over the counter pain medication except for Tylenol 1 week before and 1 week after your surgery. This includes brand names Advil, Motrin, Aleve, and generic ibuprofen, naproxyn.
• You will be contacted by phone the night before surgery and given your arrival time. Usually you are instructed to arrive 2 hours before your surgery start time.
• Please eat your normal dinner and drink non-alcoholic fluids the night before surgery. Nothing to eat or drink after midnight. No breakfast or beverages (nothing by mouth) the morning of your surgery.
• Please wash your hair the night before or the morning of surgery.

INCISION BEHIND YOUR EAR

Your surgery required an incision behind the ear. A pressure dressing, made up of a soft plastic “cup” over the ear and Velcro-fastened strap has been applied to reduce swelling. The gauze under the “cup” can be changed as often as needed. The dressing can be removed 24 hours after surgery. There is a piece of “Telfa”, a non-stick white dressing, on the surface of the incision. This can be removed when the dressing is taken off.

The incision behind the ear is closed with absorbable sutures under the skin, and “skin glue” on the outer skin edges. There are no sutures or staples that need to be removed. The incision should be kept dry for 3 days after the surgery. You may shower and wash your hair after 72 hours, but avoid soaking or scrubbing the area behind the ear.

Petroleum-based ointments (like Vaseline) should not be used on the incision during the first week, since they cause the skin glue to dissolve. After 1 week, the skin glue has done its job in helping the incision to heal and it may be peeled off. You can also allow it to come off on its own, which usually happens in about 3 weeks after surgery. If you like, the application of some Vaseline or other petroleum-based antibiotic ointment can make the glue easier to remove after the first week.

MEDICATIONS AFTER SURGERY

[ ] Pain medicine – You have been given a prescription for pain medicine. Take this as directed for any discomfort. Watch out for constipation, a common side effect of pain medications. Ok to take fiber and a stool softener like Colace after surgery.
Antibiotics – You have been given a course of oral antibiotics. Take this as instructed until they are gone. A common side effect of antibiotics is loose stools, this should resolve after you finish your antibiotics. Please eat yogurt, or take an over the counter probiotic if you get diarrhea.

- A medication can be provided to you if you are dizzy after your surgery.

ACTIVITIES
- Avoid blowing your nose or “popping” your ears by holding your nose and blowing. This can force air into the middle ear, and disrupt healing. Wiping the nose or sniffing is fine.
- Try not to sneeze. If you have to sneeze, sneeze with your mouth open to allow the air to escape, and not be forced into the ears.
- Avoid any heavy lifting (over 25 pounds) or strenuous exercise for the first two weeks.
- Avoid bending with the head down for 2 weeks. If you must bend, bend at the knees, and keep your head up as much as possible.
- You may sleep however you are most comfortable. Keeping the head somewhat elevated while sleeping will help reduce swelling over the first week.
- Patients will often have some dizziness or balance problems following cochlear implant surgery. You should avoid driving, climbing, or operating hazardous equipment until your balance has stabilized at a safe level.
- Avoid airplane flights for the first 2 weeks following surgery. If you have specific travel plans that would conflict with this, please discuss this with your doctor.

POST OPERATION SYMPTOMS
Ringing in the ear (tinnitus) and dizziness (vertigo) are both commonly seen following cochlear implantation. These usually improve over the first few weeks following surgery. Patients may also have a change in their sense of taste. If present, this usually improves over the first 3 to 6 months.

Call us if you experience any of the following:
- Increasing redness, swelling or pain around the incision site.
- The presence of thick or foul-smelling drainage.
- Progressive or severe dizziness, with vomiting or balance issues.
- Fevers, chills, severe headache, or stiff neck.
- Any other problems that concern you.

FOLLOW UP APPOINTMENTS AND DEVICE ACTIVATION
The first appointment after your surgery is usually scheduled 1-2 weeks after surgery. At this time, you will see your Surgeon and Audiologist. The Audiologist will see you on 2 visits to activate your Cochlea Implant device.

We are always happy to see you earlier should you have any problems or concerns.

CONTACT INFORMATION
If you have questions or concerns after your surgery, please call the Stanford Ear Institute Post-Op line at 650-863-4267 to speak with a Registered Nurse between 8:00am – 4:30 Monday through Friday.

For emergencies after hours or on weekends, please call the Stanford Medical Center page operator at 650-723-6661 and ask to speak with the ENT resident doctor on call.