



Stanford Cancer Center
Head Neck Oncology Clinic

Postoperative Instructions for Wide Local Excision and Sentinel Lymph Node Biopsy

Incision Care

WIDE LOCAL EXCISION

- After surgery, your incision will be covered with a dressing (clear tape and underlying gauze). Leave this dressing in place for 48 hours after surgery. Remove the tape and gauze 48 hours after surgery.
- You may shower 48 hours after surgery, but do not soak in a tub or pool for 2 weeks after surgery. After you finish showering, pat your incision dry. Do not scrub with soap or a washcloth for the first 10 days.
- The skin edges will be closed together using either 1) self-dissolving suture underneath the skin surface or 2) outside sutures that will need to be removed in the office
 1. *For sutures underneath the skin:* your incision will be covered with surgical glue called Dermabond. This will adhere to the skin for about 7-10 days. The glue will gradually flake off by itself. The suture underneath the skin will naturally dissolve in 3-4 months.
 2. *For external sutures:* after removing the dressing from surgery, apply a thin film of Vaseline or Aquaphor over the sutured area to keep it moist. The sutures are usually removed in the office 2-3 weeks after surgery.
- Occasionally, a drain may be left in place to prevent fluid from forming underneath the incision. If you have a drain, please refer to the JP drain care instruction sheet.
- Once the Dermabond is off or the external sutures are removed, you may massage the scar with moisturizing lotion to help the scar soften. The scar will gradually flatten and become less red over time.
- Use a sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher) or keep the incision covered if in the sun for the first 6 months to a year as the sun can darken your scar.
- Soft swelling at the incision site and skin numbness surrounding the incision is normal. Swelling typically resolves in 4-6 weeks, and numbness may take even longer.

SENTINEL LYMPH NODE BIOPSY

- Your incision will be covered with Dermabond. This will adhere to the skin for about 7-10 days. The glue will naturally flake off by itself.
- Shower and wound care instructions are the same as for wide local excision.
- As with wide local excision, mild swelling at the incision site and skin numbness surrounding the incision is normal and usually resolve with time.

Activity

- Minimize physical activity for one week after surgery: no lifting, bending, or straining. Do not do any heavy lifting (over 10 lbs) or exercising for 4 weeks.

Diet

- There are no restrictions on what you may eat. You should return to your normal diet.

Pain control

- Take your prescription pain medicine regularly for the first few days after surgery. After that, you will be able to wait longer between doses. Adding ibuprofen (two Advil or the equivalent every 8 hours) to the prescription medication will also help with pain control and may be started the day after surgery.

Precautions

- Call if you develop drainage, increasing redness, or significant swelling at either of the incision sites, or if you develop a fever over 101°F

Pathology Results

- Pathology reports take up to 5-7 business days to be released, but occasionally may take longer. We will discuss the pathology results during your first post-op visit.

Contact Information

- For questions, concerns, or worries, contact the clinical team at 650-498-6000, option 5.
- For after hours issues or concerns, call 650-498-6000. The Page Operator will page Resident on Call for you.

At Stanford HealthCare, we strive to provide an *outstanding* patient experience, and we value your feedback at any point throughout your journey. You may also receive a survey in the mail, and we would appreciate your time and willingness to complete this as it will help ensure that we are meeting our goal and let us know of any areas that may need improvement. Thank you for allowing us to be part of your care.