



## TONGUE SURGERY POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

**Pain:** While there is a significant amount of individual variability on pain perception, tongue base surgeries have as the main issue a significant amount of post-operative pain. You will be prescribed narcotic pain medication after surgery, try to avoid allowing the pain to become intolerable before you use the medication. Pain will be present for at least 7-14 days following surgery, but it should improve around two weeks following surgery. If you are running out of medication, and you still have significant pain, please contact us before it finishes.

**Diet:** Due to the pain and difficulty swallowing, you will likely only be able to tolerate a liquid/soft diet (Ensure, Smoothies...) for the first few days after surgery. Make sure you have a good intake of fluids and avoid dehydration. You should be able to tolerate normal diet by 14 days following surgery. During this period of recovery, you should avoid hard and dried foods such as nuts, since these can cause pain and predispose to bleeding.

**Avoid strenuous physical activity for three weeks:** While spending time out of bed is important to reduce risks of developing pneumonia or blood clots in the legs, you should avoid strenuous activity since it can increase swelling or significant bleeding.

**Bleeding:** There is a good chance that you will have minor bleeding episodes following surgery. If the bleeding doesn't stop, or if the amount of blood is greater than approximately half of a cup, please come immediately to the Stanford's emergency department, or if you don't live nearby, to the nearest ED.

**Sleep with head elevated:** Elevating your head around 30-45 degrees decreases swelling and improve breathing after palate surgery.

**Taste abnormalities, swallowing difficulty, and numbness in the tongue are not uncommon after tongue surgery, usually temporary, and rarely permanent.**