

Care Instructions After Parotid Gland Excision

What is the parotid gland?

The **parotid gland** is a salivary gland located in front of the ear. A **salivary gland** is a body part that makes **saliva** (spit) to keep the mouth and throat wet. Saliva drains from the parotid gland through a tube that opens on the inside of the cheek, next to the upper back teeth.

What does parotid gland excision surgery involve?

- A **parotid gland excision** is a surgery to remove the parotid gland. During this surgery, you will be under general anesthesia (meaning we will give you medication so you will be completely asleep during the operation).
- The operation involves making a cut (called an **incision**) starting in front of your ear and going down toward your neck or behind your ear. Then we will remove the parotid gland. Once the gland is removed, we will close the cut with stitches. We will remove these stitches at your follow-up appointment, around a week after surgery.
 - If your gland is being removed because of a stone that is causing an infection, we may also need to make a cut inside your mouth to remove that stone.
- At the end of the operation, we will place a small tube (called a drain) through your skin near the incision. This drain will remove any blood which may build up around the area of your surgery. We will usually remove the drain on the morning after your surgery.

What can I expect after surgery?

- You usually need to stay a night in the hospital after this surgery.

- We will give you some pain medication to help keep you comfortable. You likely won't have too much pain or soreness after surgery.
- There is usually only a little swelling after this surgery. Since part of the gland is removed, it can leave a dent under your skin.

How do I care for my incision after surgery?

- It is important to keep the incision dry for the first week following surgery.
- All cuts made through the skin leave a scar, but most of these fade with time and are difficult to see when they are fully healed. It may take several months for your scar from the incision to fade, but eventually it should blend into the natural folds and shape of your face.
- Wearing sunscreen regularly is important after the stitches come out. This will help your scar fade as it continues to heal.

What activities should I avoid after surgery?

We recommend you take a week off from work to recover from the surgery. During this time, you should avoid strenuous activity (anything that increases your heart rate and blood pressure).

Are there diet restrictions after surgery?

Not usually. Your surgeon will let you know if you have any restrictions on what you should eat or drink after surgery.

How do I manage my pain after surgery?

We will work with you on a pain management plan after your surgery. You should expect that you may feel some discomfort as you're healing. Usually, we will use a combination of oral medications (pills taken by mouth) to control your pain.

What follow-up care will I receive?

Your first follow-up appointment will be 1-2 weeks after your surgery, based on your surgeon's recommendation. We will give you this appointment date and time when you are discharged from the hospital.

What are possible complications (medical issues) from this surgery?

- Bleeding from the incision is unlikely. If it happens, it's usually within the first 12 hours after surgery, which is why we plan to have you stay in the hospital overnight.
- Infection is uncommon. If your surgeon thinks you may get an infection, we will prescribe a short course of antibiotics.
- Sometimes saliva leaks out of the incision (called a **salivary fistula**). This problem usually goes away on its own, but it can take several weeks to get better.
- There is a possibility of nerve damage to some or all the facial nerve, which can cause weakness of the muscles on one side of your face. Nerve damage is usually temporary, although it can take several months to recover fully.
 - The exception to this is if you have parotid gland excision for cancer treatment. This requires removal of the facial nerve, which causes permanent paralysis (loss of muscle function) on one side of your face.

When should I call my doctor?

Call your doctor if you notice any of these symptoms:

- Increased redness, swelling, or bruising around the incision
- Bleeding from the incision that isn't stopping or going away
- Increased pain or tenderness in your upper or lower jaw
- Side effects from taking medications, such as rash, nausea, headache, vomiting, increased irritability, or constipation
- Fever (by mouth) over 100.5 °F

- Make sure that you're getting enough fluids. Dehydration can cause your body temperature to rise.

Who should I call if I have questions?

- On Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM: Call (734) 936-8051 to speak to a staff member who will connect your call to the correct team of nurses.
- After 4:30 PM, or on weekends or holidays: Call (734) 936-6267 and ask for the Otolaryngology (ENT) resident on call.

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