

Excision of Neck Mass Surgery: Before and After Your Procedure

What is a neck mass?

A **neck mass** is an abnormality (something not expected) in the area between the jawline and the clavicles (collarbone). This mass may also be called a lesion, lump, bump, or collection of body fluids. It may be related to cancer or it may be benign (not cancer). It can be related to any of the structures under the skin of the neck, front to back and in between.



What is an excision of neck mass surgery?

An **excision of neck mass surgery** is a procedure to remove your neck mass. Your surgeon will send the mass to the Pathology department to help us understand what the mass is and what medical conditions we need to treat.

What are my instructions before surgery?

- Eat a healthy and balanced diet, drink plenty of water, and stay as physically active as possible before surgery. These activities will help your body prepare for surgery and heal better after surgery.
- 2 weeks before surgery, stop smoking, vaping, and using recreational drugs or alcohol.

What can I expect after surgery?

- Your neck will be tender for the first 3 days after surgery.
- You may not feel like eating or drinking as much as usual for a few days after surgery.
- Depending on the size of the mass, we may leave a small, straw-like drain in the **incision** (the cut we made in your neck for the surgery). Gauze will cover the drain to soak up any draining fluids. Your surgeon will remove this drain 1-2 days after surgery.
- Usually, the surgeon will close your incision with dissolvable sutures (stitches) or surgical glue. Your sutures or glue will typically dissolve by 2 weeks after surgery, and they do not need to be removed.

What can I eat and drink after surgery?

- Eat softer foods and drink more fluids than usual for the first 3 days after surgery (or longer, if your neck still feels tender).
- Eat smaller, more frequent meals that are high in protein. Eating protein will help your body heal. Ideas on how to add protein to your diet can be found here: bit.ly/MM-HighCalorieProtein.
- If another doctor told you to limit how much liquid you drink (for example, if you have a heart or kidney condition), please follow those instructions.

What activities can I do after surgery?

- Rest at home for the first 1-3 days after surgery, and limit your physical activity during this time.
- When you lie down, keep your head slightly raised using 1-2 pillows.
- Do not lift, strain, or do any activities or exercise that will increase your heart rate or blood pressure for 2 weeks after surgery. Limiting physical activity will help reduce the risk of possible bleeding or extreme swelling.
- You may shower, but do not swim, use a tub or bath, or go under water for 2 weeks after surgery.

How do I take care of my incision after surgery?

- You may keep your incision uncovered while you are at home. If you leave the house, cover the area with a bandage while you are out.
- Do not use makeup, sunscreen, or lotions within 3 inches of your incision for 2 weeks after surgery.
- Do not shave over the area for your surgery for 3 weeks after surgery. Be careful when you start shaving the area again, because there may be numbness (loss of feeling) near the area.
- 4-6 weeks after surgery, you can massage and use scar cream on the incision. Massage the scar for 5 minutes, 5 times a day using Biocorneum® scar cream in the morning, vitamin E oil throughout the day (mid-morning, afternoon, and early evening), and then Biocorneum® before you go to bed. You can buy Biocorneum® without a prescription.
 - Continue doing this until all of the Biocorneum® is used up.
 - You can buy Biocorneum® from the University of Michigan Center for Facial Cosmetic Surgery office in Livonia. Learn more at medicine.umich.edu/dept/facial-cosmetic-surgery and call 1-800-493-3223 to place an order.

- For vitamin E oil, you can buy capsules (pills) with vitamin E and open them to use the oil inside. You can also buy vitamin E oil, but this usually costs more than the capsules.
- Keep your incision scars out of the sun for at least 6 months after surgery. If you cannot avoid the sun, use a strong sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher.

How do I manage my pain at home after surgery?

- You may have a sore throat for 2-3 weeks after surgery that may limit how much you're able to chew. This is normal and will get better with time.
- Take your pain medications as prescribed **around-the-clock** (all day and night, based on your prescribed schedule) for the first 3 days when you have swelling. Swallowing will be easier 30 minutes after taking your pain medications.
- You can use ice packs to help with your pain. Place your ice pack in a cloth. You can use the ice pack for 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off while you're awake for the first 3 days. Don't put the ice pack directly on the incision.

What follow-up appointments will I have after surgery?

- If you had a drain placed, you'll have an appointment to remove the within 2 days of your surgery.
- After your drain removal appointment, your doctor will talk with you about any other follow-up appointments you may need. These appointments can be in-person or video visits.
- We will share the results from the Pathology department with you when they're available, which can take 3-5 days.

When can I go back to work after surgery?

Typically, you will be off work for 1 week, depending on the type of work you do. If your job involves lifting anything heavier than 10-20 pounds, you may need to be off for closer to 2 weeks.

When should I call the doctor?

Call us if you experience any of these symptoms:

- Fever higher than 101 °F
- You're unable to drink or swallow
- Vomiting that isn't going away
- Feelings of pain, pressure, or fullness in your neck that are not controlled by pain medications

What is the contact information?

Taubman Center Otolaryngology Clinic

- 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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Author: Jayson Greenberg, MD FACS
Edited by: Brittany Batell, MPH MSW CHES®
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