

Postoperative Instructions for Skull Base Surgery

Ashkan Monfared, MD

The Ear, Nose & Throat Center at The GW Medical Faculty Associates | 202.741.3250

2021 K Street, NW Suite 206 | Washington, DC 20036 | www.gwdocs.com

Wound Care

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, and the entire dressing can be removed 48 hours after the surgery. The dressing is designed to put pressure on the wound so it needs to be tight. However, it should not be too tight to leave a mark on the skin or give you headaches.

The incision should be kept dry till you are seen by your surgeon. You may shower and wash your hair after 72 hours, but avoid soaking or scrubbing the area behind the ear.

Jaw Joint Pain and Tenderness:

You may experience pain and difficulty opening your mouth after this surgery. It is recommended for you to gradually increase the range of mouth opening by gently pressing down on the lower jaw with your thumbs. This would prevent scar formation of the lower jaw and help with stretching of the muscle. If you do not have allergy or adverse reactions to Ibuprofen you could start taking Advil or Ibuprofen 7 days after surgery for muscle pain.

Care of the Eye:

When you blink, you wipe tears over the front of your eye to keep your eye moist. If you have facial nerve weakness and you can't blink, your eye can dry out. This can lead to permanent damage to the cornea (the clear covering over the colored part of the eye). Here are some easy ways to protect your eye:

When you are awake:



Eye drops are very good at moisturizing the eye. There are several kinds of eye drops, ranging from very watery to quite thicker. To apply the eye drops tilt your head back slightly and toward the eye you're treating. Pull down your lower eyelid and apply the drops between your lower lid and the

white of your eye. Steady your hand by resting two fingers against your cheek or nose.

Thin drops:

- Crystal clear and do not blur vision.
- Evaporate quickly, usually in 10-15 minutes.
- They come in two types: preserved and non-preserved. We recommend using preserved tears at first. They are less expensive and the bottles can be reused. If you are allergic to the preservative, switch to the non-preserved variety. They work just as well but cost more and come in more difficult to use single-use containers.

Thicker drops:

- Last longer than watery kinds, usually 1-2 hours.
- May make your vision slightly blurred, particularly at night when lights may produce glare (such as from oncoming headlights).

We generally recommend thicker drops for regular use because they last longer. A good brand that is easy to get without a prescription is Celluvisc (Allergan Inc).

When you go to sleep:

If you have facial nerve weakness, your eye may stay open while you sleep. This dries out the cornea. These are three methods of keeping the eye moist at night:

- Eye ointments such as Lacrilube and Duratears last a long time and help protect the cornea by helping to keep the eyelids shut. To apply the ointment, squeeze a small ribbon of medication along the inside of your lower eyelid. Then gently close the upper eyelid and look in all directions to spread the ointment over the eye. Your vision may be blurred after the ointment is applied. This is normal.
- Eye bubble also called a bullar shield along with the eye ointment. Eye bubbles are placed around the eye. If properly placed, little droplets of moisture form on the inner surface in about 15 minutes. Each bubble can be used for several days, until the adhesive has worn out.

An Eye Bubble Sample



Eye bubbles are very difficult to find locally. They can be ordered (10 per box) from:

Medtronic Xomed
Catalogue #85-90300
(800) 874-5797

Postoperative Instructions for Skull Base Surgery

Ashkan Monfared, MD

The Ear, Nose & Throat Center at The GW Medical Faculty Associates | 202.741.3250

2021 K Street, NW Suite 206 | Washington, DC 20036 | www.gwdocs.com

- Eye Taping. Use 3M Transpore Tape also known as the eye tape on the side of the eye to keep it shut at night. Do not cross the tape over the center of the eye. **DO NOT USE AN EYESHIELD.** Your eye might open at night and the eye shield can cause a corneal scratch.

When to call your doctor:

Never put any medication in your eyes unless the label reads FOR OPHTHALMIC USE or FOR USE IN THE EYES. Call your doctor immediately if your vision is not as clear or sharp as usual and it becomes persistently blurred.

Activities

- Avoid blowing your nose or “popping” your ears by holding your nose and blowing. Wiping the nose or sniffing is fine. Similarly, if you have to sneeze, sneeze with your mouth open to allow the air to escape, and not be forced into the ears.
- Avoid straining, heavy lifting, bearing down, or bending down since all of these activities would increase the pressure of the fluid around the brain and might lead into this liquid leaking from the ear into the nose. Always keep your head above your heart till otherwise recommended by your surgeon.
- Patients will often have some dizziness or balance problems following surgery. You should avoid driving, climbing, or operating hazardous equipment until your balance has stabilized at a safe level.

Medications

[] **Pain medicine**—You have been given a prescription for pain medicine. Take this as directed for any discomfort. You are also given a stool softer to avoid constipation from the pain medicine.

[] **Antibiotics**—You have been given a course of oral antibiotics. Take this as instructed until they are gone.

Additional medications:

What to Watch for

Call us if you experience any of the following:

- Increasing swelling, redness or pain around the incision site, presence of thick or foul-smelling drainage.
- Progressive or severe dizziness.
- New onset paralysis of the face or other neurologic symptoms such as double vision.
- Severe, uncontrollable headaches particularly if accompanied by neck rigidity and being bothered by light.
- Severe dryness of the eye, redness or pain. You should be seen by an eye doctor to evaluate you for a corneal scratch immediately.

Follow-up Appointments

If you already do not have an appointment, please call the Ear, Nose & Throat Center at (202) 741-3017 to schedule an appointment for

[] 3 weeks after surgery

[] _____ after surgery

Contacting Us

If you need to speak with us about scheduling appointments or follow up, please call (202) 741-3250.

If you have medical questions or concerns, please call the Ear, Nose & Throat Center at (202) 741-3250. One of our nursing staff will be at this number from 8am to 5pm Monday through Friday.

For emergencies after hours, please call the George Washington Hospital page operator at (202) 715-4000, and ask for the Ear, Nose & Throat Center resident on call.

Signature _____

Date _____



THE EAR, NOSE
& THROAT CENTER
at the GW Medical Faculty Associates

© GW Medical Faculty Associates 2011

