

Neck Dissection Surgery

What is neck dissection surgery?

Neck dissection surgery is an operation that removes the lymph glands from one or both sides of your neck. Lymph glands are found in the neck, armpits and groin areas of your body. As blood moves around, fluid leaks into the tissues. Lymph glands collect this fluid and drain it back into the bloodstream.

What happens before surgery?

You will come to the Pre-Admission Assessment Unit 1 to 2 weeks before to learn how to get ready for surgery. Here you will meet with a nurse and an anesthetist.

In this clinic, you will have blood taken for any tests your surgeon has ordered. You will also have a heart test done called an ECG. You will meet with the anesthetist to talk about having general anesthesia for this surgery. This means that you sleep during surgery.



In the Pre-Admission Assessment Unit you will get a set of instructions to follow before surgery. If you are not sure of anything, contact your surgeon's office for advice.

If you have a CPAP or BiPAP machine:

Get ready to bring your machine and mask to the hospital the day of surgery.

Write down your prescription provider and settings for the machine so your health care providers will be able to operate it.

The respiratory technician at St. Joseph's Hospital may need to talk to your provider about your settings.



What to bring to hospital:

Pack your bag and follow the list you got in the Pre-Admission Assessment Unit. Bring your CPAP or BiPAP machine and mask if you use one at home.



The Day Before Surgery

Diet and Bowel Preparation:

Follow the eating and drinking instructions you were given in the Pre-Admission Assessment Unit. **'Nothing to Eat or Drink'** means no chewing gum, sucking candy or anything.

You can take any medications the anesthesiologist reviewed with you in the Pre-Admission Assessment Unit with a small sip of water.



What happens on the day of surgery?

You will check in at the Reception Desk of the Day Surgery Unit about 2 hours before surgery. You will wait in the waiting room until you are called in. If you have a friend or family member with you, you go into the Day Surgery Unit by yourself at first.

In the Day Surgery Unit, you will get ready for surgery. You will go to the bathroom and then put on a hospital gown. The nurse will ask you some questions and answer your questions.

You will have a small tube put in your arm called an IV. The IV gives you fluid and medication during and after surgery.



Before surgery, the surgeon will also come to see you and mark the surgical area with a special pen. The anesthesiologist or anesthesiologist's assistant will also come and talk to you before surgery,

When you are ready for surgery, the nurse will ask your family member or friend to come into the unit to wait with you until you go into the operating room.

The Operation

When it is time, you will be taken to the Operating Room. This room is bright and cool. You will move from your stretcher bed onto the operating room table with help.

The team then goes through the steps of preparing for surgery called a “surgical time out.” They make sure they have the right patient and the right surgery before starting your anesthesia.

The surgery takes 2 to 5 hours depending on what your surgeon plans to do.



Recovery

You will go to the Post Anesthetic Care Unit (PACU). You will be watched closely by the nurses and given pain control medication. You will stay here until you are fully awake and then go to your bed on a nursing unit. There is a waiting room close to this area in the main lobby for your support person to wait.

How will I feel after surgery?

After surgery, you will go to the recovery area. You will be watched closely until you are fully awake. If you feel pain or have an upset stomach, you will be given medication to help.

When you are fully awake, you will go to the:

- Day Surgery Unit if you are going home the same day
- Head and Neck Unit if you are staying in the hospital

This depends on the type of care you need and what your doctor decides.

Intravenous

The IV will give you fluids and medication after surgery. It is taken out when you are able to drink well.



Eating and drinking

For the first day or two after surgery, you will drink fluids until you are ready for solid food. Most people do not have problems swallowing. If you have problems, a dietitian will help plan your meals.

Pain Control

You may have some pain or discomfort from your incision.

Ask your nurse for pain control medication when you need it. Your nurse will let you know how often you can have pain control medication.

Other ways to relieve pain are:

- walking
- any method of relaxation such as listening to music, deep breathing or imagery



Nausea

Some people have nausea after a general anesthetic. It is very important to tell your nurse if you feel sick to your stomach. You can have medication to help.

Catheter

During surgery, you may have a thin tube put into your bladder to drain urine. This is taken out when you are drinking well and can go to the bathroom.

Incision care

The incision in your neck is closed with sutures, clips or tape. You will not have a dressing over the incision. You will have one or more small drain tubes coming from the incision. Extra fluid from the surgery collects in the drain(s). The drains are checked regularly and emptied when needed. They are removed when the drainage is less than 5 ml or 1 teaspoon.

Your neck will be cleaned daily. If you are at home, you will be taught how to clean your neck before you go home and the visiting nurse will check as well.

Activity

You need to move around to prevent breathing and circulation problems. Moving also helps you build strength and recover faster.

Within 1 to 4 hours after surgery you will be helped to sit at the side of your bed. You will be encouraged to do deep breathing and coughing exercises. Walking promotes healing. Increase the amount your walk each day. Wear non-slip shoes with full backs for safety when walking.

Before you go home

A visiting nurse and any other services you need at home will be arranged before you leave the hospital. You will also be given any prescriptions you need for medications before you leave.

When do I see my doctor for follow-up?

You will be given an appointment to see your doctor 1 to 3 weeks after you go home. If you did not get an appointment contact your doctor and make one.

When you are home

The visiting nurse will see you each day. You will be able to problem solve situations when the nurse visits. You, your doctor and nurse decide when you no longer need home visits.

Cleaning the incision

You will learn how to clean the incision to promote healing and prevent infection. The visiting nurse will take the sutures or clips out. The nurse will take the drain out when there is less than 5 ml or 1 teaspoon of drainage.

Watch for signs of infection around the incision. These include:

- increased redness or swelling
- yellow or green discharge
- increased temperature

Contact your doctor if you have any of these signs.

Maintain a healthy diet

Healthy eating promotes healing. Eat a variety of food and follow the Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating. You can see a copy of this on the Health Canada website: **www.hc-sc.gc.ca**

If you have any questions or concerns about what to eat, talk to your visiting nurse or call the dietitian at 905-522-1155 ext. 33509.

