Vascular Surgery

Carotid Endarterectomy

Information for patients leaving hospital

Aim
This information is to help answer any questions you might have now, and help you know what to expect after your operation and in the first few weeks after you return home. Please feel free to ask any of your nurses or doctors if you have questions whilst in hospital.

You can find further information regarding vascular illnesses at www.circulationfoundation.org.uk

Should you have any concerns after your discharge please contact our vascular nurse specialists on 01223 596382.

What happened during the operation?
Your surgeon will have explained what your operation involved before and after your operation, and you should have been provided with written information from your consent form.

Briefly, you have had an operation to treat the narrowed (diseased area) artery in your neck, by removing the plaque on the inside of the arterial wall and therefore restoring the blood flow to your brain. The cut in the wall of the artery has been repaired using a patch of material, which prevents the artery narrowing after the operation.

During the operation, an incision (cut) was made that runs obliquely (at an angle) along the side of your neck from just below your ear lobe to just below the side of your Adam’s apple.

Do I have stitches?
For this operation, your surgeon will have been stitched on the inside with dissolvable sutures and skin glue used to close the outer edges of the wound; this will dissolve on its own, usually within two weeks.

Do I need to do anything to the wound dressing?
Your dressing is usually removed prior to discharge and because of the position of the wound it only needs redressing if it continues to ooze. If your wound is still oozing a little when you go home, do not worry - the ward will arrange for a nurse
to continue to dress your wound. We will also keep an eye on it when you return to the outpatient clinic.

**When can I return to my normal activities?**

In general, if you start returning to normal activities and it causes you pain, stop and avoid the particular activity for another one to two weeks and then try again.

- **Exercise and mobility**: try taking a short walk at least once a day, and keep as mobile as you can by gentle activities around the house. This will help your recovery and your general health.

- **Strenuous activities**: you should avoid strenuous activities for about four to six weeks. We suggest you can resume sex after about six weeks, or when you feel comfortable to do so.

- **Driving**: you should avoid driving for about four to six weeks. For your safety, make sure you can safely carry out an emergency stop before you resume driving again.

- **Returning to work or study**: please ask your doctor when they think it will be safe for you to return to your work/study. It will depend on what you do, how fast you are recovering and your general health.

**I am not sure about medicines after I leave the hospital...**

Please continue taking your usual medications unless you have been told otherwise. You might have been given the following medicines to take after you leave hospital:

- **Antibiotics**: these are to prevent or treat infection. It is always very important that you complete the course of antibiotics. If you have problems taking them for any reason, contact your GP who can advise.

- **Anti-platelet agents**: (aspirin/clopidogrel)/cholesterol lowering tablets (statins): These might have been prescribed for you by your hospital doctor or your GP. You might have started them while you were staying in hospital or after you left. They can help protect you from heart attacks and strokes and you should take them for as long as your doctor tells you, which can be for the rest of your life. If you have problems taking them, for example side-effects, please contact your GP who can offer you advice and maybe some alternatives.

- **Painkillers**: If we have given you some stronger painkillers to take home with you, please take them as directed. Most patients find they can stop taking them soon after leaving hospital - maybe changing to their usual 'over the counter' tablets. If you are worried, please contact your GP for advice and help.
I am feeling constipated, what can I do?
A common side effect of 'stronger than usual' painkillers is constipation. If you can, try to swap to less strong ones as soon as you can.

To avoid becoming constipated, try to drink plenty of fluids (for example water), and eat as much fibre as you can, especially fruit and vegetables. It can also help to keep active.

All of these will be good for your recovery and general health. If this does not help your constipation, please contact your GP for advice and help.

How about washing?
You may take your usual shower or bath after your surgery if your wound is dry. However do not soak your wound for a long period of time, and try to avoid using perfumed soaps etc because they can irritate wounds.

Make sure you dry the wound area carefully after washing to help it heal.

I feel very tired after the surgery, should I be worried?
It is your body's way of recovering; you have had a major operation, which is stressful for your body. It will probably take one to three weeks before you feel as well as you did before this surgery. Rest when you feel tired.

Why do I need to return to your outpatient clinic?
You will have one appointment at approximately six to eight weeks after your surgery to check that you have recovered from your surgery. If all is well we will not need to see you again.

Why have you told me to stop/cut down my smoking?
Smoking is very bad for the health of your blood vessels, it damages the arterial lining (arterial disease) which allows the build up of plaque that causes the blockage.

Giving up smoking (or cutting right down) is one of the best things you can do for your health.

I am struggling to give up smoking, where can I get some help?
There are many more ways in which you can be helped to stop smoking. For example there are new medications and other new ways of helping you. Please do not think you are on your own. See the end of this information for useful contact numbers - and your GP practice is a very good place to start.
Contacts for help to stop smoking:

Camquit is a local 'stop smoking' specialist service; you can contact them directly or through your GP practice. Their telephone number is:

- Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire 01223 723022
- East Cambridgeshire and Fenland 0800 018430
- Huntingdonshire 01480 418693
- Website: www.camquit.nhs.uk. If you wish we can refer you to them

- There is also a national NHS Stop Smoking Helpline: 0800 169 0 169 (textphone: 0800 169 0 171) and website: www.givingupsmoking.co.uk

- You can also pick up copies of the free 'Giving it up for life' booklet from the Information Centre at Addenbrooke's. This has a lot of useful advice, attractively presented.

Privacy & Dignity

Same sex bays and bathrooms are offered in all wards except critical care and theatre recovery areas where the use of high-tech equipment and/or specialist one to one care is required.

We are currently working towards a smoke free site. Smoking is only permitted in the designated smoking areas.

For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169

Help with this leaflet:

If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio format, please ask the department to contact Patient Information: 01223 216032 or patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Document history

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