

**FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

- We advise that you do not smoke at least one week prior to surgery, to help prevent complications developing from your anaesthetic and surgery.
- Please note that there are no laundry facilities available.
- Please do not bring jewellery or large sums of money into the hospital. However, you may want some change for daily requirements such as newspapers, magazines or phone calls.

**PLEASE WRITE DOWN ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS WHICH YOU WOULD LIKE TO ASK THE NURSING OR MEDICAL STAFF WHEN YOU ARE ADMITTED TO THE HOSPITAL.**

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**Please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Yeo Sek Wee if you have any questions or concerns at +603 2160 0000**

**A GUIDE FOR PATIENTS  
HAVING A NECK DISSECTION**



**PUSAT PERUBATAN  
PRINCE COURT  
MEDICAL CENTRE**

*This booklet is a guide and is no substitute for a full and open discussion of the risks and benefits of the proposed procedure, these should be discussed with your doctor. The specific details of your care may vary from the matters discussed in this guide*

**PLEASE BRING THIS BOOKLET WITH YOU ON  
YOUR ADMISSION TO THE HOSPITAL**

## **WHAT IS A NECK DISSECTION?**

A neck dissection is the surgical procedure whereby the glands or lymph nodes are removed from the neck arising from a primary malignancy in the head and neck region. The glands or lymph nodes are a drainage system to the structures of the face and throat.

## **WHAT HAPPENS BEFORE SURGERY?**

Certain diagnostic tests may be organised prior to your surgery such as blood tests if indicated. Generally speaking, patients are admitted to the hospital on the day of surgery.

- **If you smoke, it is advised to cease smoking one week prior to surgery.**

## **HOW LONG WILL I BE IN HOSPITAL?**

Usually patients having a neck dissection will be hospitalised for three to four days. You will be discharged home between approximately 10.00-11.00am on the day of discharge.

## **WHAT SORT OF ANAESTHETIC WILL I HAVE?**

You will be given a general anaesthetic to put you to sleep. Any questions you have about your anaesthetic will be answered prior to your operation by the anaesthetist.

## **WHAT HAPPENS TO ME AFTER SURGERY?**

- You will feel drowsy after the operation and may require some oxygen until fully awake.

- You may experience nausea and vomiting. The nursing staff will give you medication to control this symptom.

## **WHAT TO BRING TO HOSPITAL**

### **Personal toiletries**

- Deodorant, powder
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Hairbrush and/or comb
- Soap, shampoo/conditioner
- Tissue

### **Clothing**

- Dressing gown
- Pajamas (one for each expected day of stay)
- Underpants (loose and firm fitting jocks)
- Slippers or firm shoes (no slippers)

### **Remember**

- Bring any X-RAYS, CT SCANS and any MEDICATIONS that you normally or occasionally take with you on admission.

### *Support Services*

- If you are concerned about any aspects of your finances or treatment and require additional support to help you or your family, please advise your nurse or doctor while in hospital or clinic and we will arrange to have a social worker see you.
- Remember everyone is an individual and will react differently to an operation. Please feel free to discuss any problems with staff members on the ward.

### **WARD VISITING HOURS**

Visitors are welcome between the hours of 8.00am and 8.00pm. It is requested that all other times are respected as rest periods for the patients. Please note that visitors are restricted to immediate family only on the day of operation.

### **PHONE ENQUIRIES**

It would be appreciated if you could also restrict all patient enquiries to the nominated times below and nominate one family member to make the calls due to the busy nature of the ward. Thank you.  
(10.00am – 12.00midday, 2.00-4.00pm, 6.00-8.00pm)

- You may eat and drink once you are fully awake and alert which is usually about four hours following your return to ward. You will be given ice to suck initially.
- You will have an intravenous drip in your arm, which will ensure you do not become dehydrated. You may be given antibiotics following the operation.
- You will be encouraged to deep breathe and perform leg exercises to avoid complications such as a chest infection and clots in the legs. You will also have to wear special stockings call TED stockings which provide pressure to help prevent blood clots from forming.
- You will feel discomfort as the anaesthetic wears off and may need pain relieving medications. Your pain will be controlled by injections of pain killers or by swallowing pain relief medication. Please let your nurse know if your discomfort is not relieved.
- The bed head will be semi-upright (approximately 30-40 degrees) and will remain this way overnight to encourage air into your lungs and to help drainage of the fluid under your wound.
- You will have an incisional wound along your neck with staples (clips) keeping it together to ensure it heals correctly. You will also have a drain tube/s into your neck to drain away excess fluid, which may accumulate at the site of surgery. These will be removed when there is little drainage, usually post-op day two or three.

### **WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN I GO HOME?**

#### *Wound Care*

Discomfort at the wound site is common and at first the wound will be hard and firm due to stitches deep in the tissue. The wound will soften over months to become a pale thin scar. Notify your doctor if the following occurs:

1. The wound oozes especially look for signs of infection such as yellow or creamy discharge.
2. The wound becomes very red or swollen.
3. The pain at the wound is increasing not decreasing.
4. The wound pulls a lot and feels too tight.

#### *Restricted Neck Movement*

- Some tightness and restriction of movement can be expected after the operation. The neck is a highly mobile and narrow support to the head. Sometimes the amount of tissue taken can affect neck and shoulder movement.
- To help prevent this it is advised that once your neck is healed you commence neck and shoulder exercises. The physiotherapist that visits you in hospital will advise you of some exercises to do, which you should continue at home. These exercises will allow freer movement of the neck and shoulder area. It may take some time for the benefits of these exercises to become evident so please persist.

#### *Personal Hygiene*

- You may wash your neck gently with a mild soap. When shaving be gentle and take care not to nick the skin. Once the wound is completely healed, you may gently rub some vitamin E cream into the scar to soften the scar.

#### *Eating*

- A healthy diet is vital to give the body what it needs to help heal the tissues. Eat a wide variety of foods so you get all your essential protein, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals. Include meat, fish, fresh fruit and vegetables in your diet.
- If you develop any difficulty with eating/swallowing while in hospital please let your nurse or doctor know, and they will ask the dietitian to

see you. If you develop a problem when you are home please see your doctor straight away. Don't wait until you lose weight before seeking advice.

- You may require additional nutrient supplements, especially if you are underweight or are having more treatment.

#### *Smoking*

- If you smoke, it would be most wise to consider stopping, as this can only complicate your recovery. Please ask the nurse if you would like information about quitting.

#### *Medication*

- Take your medication as prescribed. Take your painkillers as advised by the doctor, when you require it.

#### *Activity*

- You may feel quite tired following your operation. When you are discharged home it is advised that you take it easy and rest during the day as you did in hospital for the first seven to ten days.

#### *Follow-up*

- An appointment will be made for one week for review in the clinic following your operation. Your staples/clips will most likely be removed at this appointment and you will have continued follow-up as advised by Dr Yeo
- Some people will go on to radiotherapy following a neck dissection to destroy cancer cells that may not have been removed by surgery. If you require radiotherapy your doctor will advise you.