

Postoperative Care after Skull Base Surgery

About Postoperative Care Visits

Post-operative office visits are an indispensable part of the surgery, since they help promote healing and prevent persistent or recurrent disease. During these visits, the surgical cavity is cleaned and inspected. Early scar tissue may be removed, and the medical treatment strategy will be adjusted.

Your first post-operative visit will occur typically within the first 1-6 weeks after surgery.

Although complications from the manipulations performed during the post-operative visits are very rare, the theoretical risks are the same as the surgery itself. Consent for surgery includes consent for post-operative care, since the surgery and post-operative care are so closely related.

Failure to follow the postop care regimen can adversely affect the outcome of the surgery.

What can I expect to experience during post-op visits?

During each post-op visit, your physician will ask several questions about your current symptoms, and then he or she will perform an examination. That examination will typically include nasal endoscopy.

Early post-op visits typically include endoscopic debridement. During this office procedure, your surgeon will remove debris (old blood, mucus, devitalized tissue) from your sinus cavities. Infected secretions may be sent for cultures.

This procedure is performed with or without topical anesthesia during a regular office visit. You may experience some discomfort post-operatively due to manipulation and inflammation. Take your pain medication as directed. Often extra-strength Tylenol is sufficient. You may wish to take medication for pain prior to your post-operative visits (particularly early on, when the nose is most sensitive). If the medication is sedating, be sure to have someone available to drive you.

You can expect some bleeding from your nose for several days after the surgery and again after each office debridement. When bleeding occurs down the front of your nose or into the back of your throat, you should tilt your head back while sitting up and breathe gently through your nose. If bleeding persists for an extended period of time, please call the office.

As the sinuses begin to clear themselves, you can expect to have some thick brown drainage from your nose. This is mucus and old blood and does not indicate an infection.

Important Instructions for the Postoperative Period

- You will have a drip pad or “mustache dressing” in place after surgery to catch any oozing you may have. Change this as needed. Once the oozing

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slows or stops, you can take the dressing off. Oozing for the first few days after surgery is normal.

- After your first postoperative visit, you will be given instructions on when to resume any nasal sprays or irrigations you were on preoperatively.
- Do not blow your nose for two weeks after surgery. (Occasionally, you will be given instructions not to blow your nose for longer periods of time.)
- Do not bend, lift or strain for two weeks after surgery. These activities will promote bleeding from your nose. You should not participate in rigorous activity until healing is completed.
- Do not suppress the need to cough or sneeze; instead, cough or sneeze with your mouth open.
- Take your prescribed medications as directed by your physician. If you were given opioid pain medication, this has Tylenol in it – so do not take extra Tylenol. Do not drive while taking opioid pain medication. If you were given antibiotics, please take them with a probiotic or at least eat yogurt every day to help prevent any GI issues.
- If you are on aspirin, warfarin (Coumadin), anti-platelet drugs (clopidogrel, or Plavix, plus many others), and/or any other blood thinner, be sure to discuss this with your surgeon before surgery. You will be given specific instructions for these medications for the period immediately before and after surgery.
- In general, you may resume other medications on the day after surgery. If you have any questions, please ask your physician.

Remember! Please call us immediately if you note fever (temperature above 100.5° F), clear watery drainage from your nose, changes in your vision, eye swelling, worsening headache and/or neck stiffness. Do not hesitate to contact our office for any questions and for any possible emergency situation. If necessary, do not hesitate to go to the emergency department nearest to you for immediate care. Our main office number is (859) 257-5405 and our after-hours number is (859) 323-5321 (ask for the ENT on call).