

# After Your Carotid Endarterectomy

## For patients going home after surgery

Read this information to learn:

- How to take care of yourself at home
- What to expect
- Who to call if you have questions



## **After surgery**

You can usually leave the hospital 1 to 2 days after a carotid endarterectomy.

- You will be discharged from the Vascular Stepdown Unit the morning after your surgery if you are going home.
- If you need to stay in hospital, you will be transferred to the Vascular Ward 4A.

## **What can I expect the day I leave the hospital?**

**Discharge time is by 11:00 am**

If a drainage tube was placed in the incision during the procedure, it will be removed before you go home.

Your medications may change:

- Your nurse, doctor or pharmacist can review any changes with you.
- You will be given any new prescriptions before you leave the hospital.

## **What symptoms may I feel as I recover?**

Each person recovers at their own pace. Your recovery time will depend on things such as age, general health, and mental attitude.

Visit your family doctor for help to manage your symptoms.

**Here are some symptoms you may have after your surgery and what you can do to help.**

<b>Symptom</b>	<b>What to do</b>
<p><b>Pain</b></p> <p>As you become more active, you may feel some pain.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take pain medicine as needed such as over-the-counter Tylenol® Extra-Strength (acetaminophen) for pain relief.</li> <li>• We may give you a prescription for stronger pain medicine before you leave the hospital.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Constipation</b></p> <p>Common when taking prescription pain medicines and being less active.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drink plenty of fluids, unless your doctor tells you otherwise.</li> <li>• If you have no dietary requirements, eat foods high in fibre such as bran breads and cereals, berries, dried fruit or prune juice.</li> <li>• Take a mild laxative, if needed.</li> <li>• If you have not had a bowel movement for longer than 3 days after taking laxatives, visit your family doctor.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Feeling tired, trouble sleeping</b></p> <p>Feeling tired after surgery is normal and may last several days.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take a nap every day. Go to bed and get up at the same time each day.</li> <li>• Increase your activity every day.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Emotions</b></p> <p>You may feel discouraged for several days or weeks after surgery. These feelings are normal. As you recover and regain your strength, this should improve.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take one day at a time. Give yourself enough time to recover.</li> <li>• If these feelings continue, visit your family doctor.</li> </ul>

## How do I take care of myself at home?

Activity	What to do
<p><b>Incision care</b></p> <p>Look at your wounds every day to make sure there are no signs of infection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It's important to keep your incision clean and dry.</li><li>• Clean by letting mild soapy water flow over the incision while showering.</li><li>• Pat dry very well. Do NOT rub. NO lotions, creams or ointments until completely healed.</li><li>• The steri-strips (white tapes) may start to peel off. You can remove 7 days after surgery.</li><li>• If you have a dressing on the incision, change it once a day until drainage stops.</li></ul>
<p><b>Showering and bathing</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You may shower 48 hours after your surgery.</li><li>• Use mild soap. Pat the incision dry with a towel.</li><li>• Do not put lotions or cream on your incision until it is completely healed.</li><li>• NO baths. NO swimming. Do NOT immerse in water for 2 weeks after your surgery.</li></ul>
<p><b>Removing your staples</b> (if you have them)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Your family doctor can remove your staples 7 to 10 days after your surgery.</li></ul>
<p><b>Lifting restrictions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do not lift anything greater than 10 lbs (5 kgs) such as a small bag of groceries for the next 4 weeks. Lifting more than this may stress or tear your incision.</li></ul>

Activity	What to do
<p><b>Safe activities and exercise</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase your activity slowly.</li> <li>• Take short walks around your home, with rest periods in between.</li> <li>• Gradually walk a little further and faster.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Returning to work</b>  (Will depend on the type of work you do)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You will be off work for at least 2 weeks, and up to 4 weeks.</li> <li>• Ask your surgeon when it's safe for you to return to work.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Driving</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not drive for 3 to 4 weeks.</li> </ul>

**How do I take of myself over the long term to prevent Carotid Artery Disease?**

Activity	What to do
<p><b>Medications</b>  Take your medications to prevent plaque from building up in your arteries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue taking Aspirin (ASA, acetylsalicylic acid) and/or Plavix (clopidogrel) as prescribed by your doctor.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Lifestyle</b>  Make changes in your life to keep your blood sugars, blood pressure and cholesterol under control.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow a healthy heart diet: have no added salt, have less sugar and eat more grains.</li> <li>• Eat at least 4 servings of fruits and vegetable every day, preferably raw.</li> <li>• Keep a healthy weight for your age and body type.</li> </ul>

Activity	What to do
<b>Stop smoking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smoking hardens and narrows your arteries, increasing your risk of cardiovascular disease.</li> <li>• If you smoke, speak to your health care team about programs and other ways to help quit.</li> </ul>

## What follow-up appointments do I need?

See your **family doctor or nurse practitioner** within 1 to 2 weeks of your surgery. At this visit, your doctor will review medicine changes and manage any symptoms.

See your **vascular surgeon** 6 weeks after surgery. Call the office to schedule an appointment.

## When should I seek medical help?



**Call your surgeon's office if you have:**

- Fevers or chills
- Difficulty swallowing
- Bleeding or drainage (pus) from the wound (incision site)
- Redness or swelling around the wound (incision site) that wasn't there before
- Pain around the incision site that is getting worse



**Call 911 or to your nearest Emergency Room if you have any of the following:**

- Weakness, tingling, drooping or loss of feeling on one side of your face or body
- Sudden double vision or trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble talking or slurred speech
- Sudden severe headache



**Go to the nearest emergency department if you have ANY OF these symptoms or warning signs of stroke:**

**F. Face:** Is it drooping?



**A. Arms:** Can you raise both?



**S. Speech:** Is it slurred or jumbled?



**T. Time:** To call 9-1-1 right away



## Who do I call for more information?

If you have questions once you go home or need to book your follow-up appointment, please call your surgeon's office:

Dr. T. Forbes	416 340 3274
Dr. K. Howe	416 340 5193
Dr. T. Lindsay	416 340 4620
Dr. G. Oreopoulos	416 340 3275
Dr. G. Roche-Nagle	416 340 5332
Dr. B. Rubin	416 340 3645
Dr. M. Witheford	416 340 3868



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