

# Preparing for Carotid Endarterectomy Surgery

## Information for patients and families

Read this information to learn:

- What a carotid endarterectomy is
- How to prepare
- What to expect
- Who to call if you have any questions



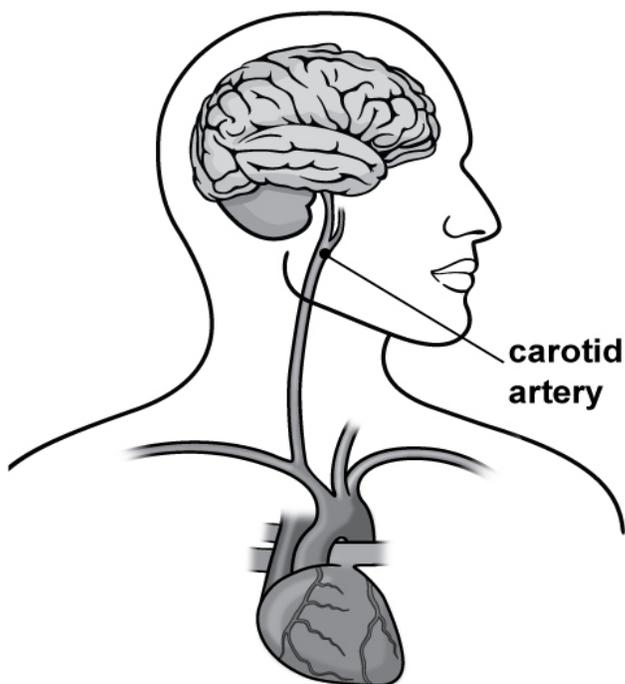
Your vascular surgeon scheduled you for a carotid endarterectomy. Your surgeon's office will give you dates for your preadmission visit and your procedure. Please read this booklet before your preadmission visit.

## **What is a carotid endarterectomy?**

A carotid endarterectomy is a type of surgery to treat a narrowing in your carotid artery. Your carotid artery is an artery in your neck that supplies blood to your brain. When there is a build-up of plaque (hardening of the artery), this narrows the artery and increases your risk of stroke.

To decrease your risk of stroke, your surgeon makes an incision (cut) in your neck to remove the plaque and repair the artery. You get an anesthetic (medicine) so you are asleep during the surgery.

The surgery usually takes about 2 to 3 hours. You can go home the next day.



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## **How long will I be in the hospital?**

You will be hospital **1 day only**. You will be discharged home the following morning.

Arrange to have someone to pick you up between 10:00 am – 11:00 am the morning after surgery.

## **Preparing for surgery**

### **Pre-Admission Clinic visit**

You will have an appointment at the Pre-Admission Clinic before your surgery. **This visit is very important to assess your health and help you prepare for your surgery and recovery.**

Depending on your needs, this visit may take from 3 hours to the entire day. If possible, bring someone with you to help you remember information and ask questions.

Unless you are given other instructions, you must come to your Pre-Admission Clinic visit or your surgery may be canceled.

### **What should I bring to my Pre-admission Clinic visit?**

- Your Ontario Health Card (OHIP card)
- Any other medical insurance information you need for your hospital stay
- All medications you are taking, in their original bottles. This includes prescription medications, and the medication, supplements, herbs and natural products that you buy without a prescription.

## What can I expect during my Pre-admission Clinic visit?

- You will fill out the paperwork for admission to the hospital.
- You may have tests, including blood tests, a chest x-ray, and an electrocardiogram (ECG) to check your heart.
- The anesthetist will examine you and discuss what type of anesthetic and pain relief you will be given.
- A nurse will ask you questions about your health and help you prepare for surgery and recovery at home. You will learn how to do deep breathing and coughing exercises that keep your lungs clear and prevent infection (such as pneumonia) after surgery.
- **The nurse will tell you when to stop eating and drinking before surgery.** The general rule is nothing to eat after midnight before surgery. You can drink water or apple juice up to 5 hours before surgery. Do not drink alcohol for 24 hours before your surgery. For surgery to be done safely, your stomach must be empty.
- A nurse or pharmacist will review your medications. They will tell you which medications to stop before surgery, and which to take on the morning of your surgery with a sip of water.

## What about my blood thinners?

Your surgeon and/or your anesthetist will talk to you about your blood thinners.

Tell them if you are on a blood thinner such as: Warfarin (Coumadin), Rivaroxaban (Xarelto), Dabigatran (Pradaxa), or Apixaban (Eliquis), Edoxaban (Lixiana). You will have to stop taking your blood thinner. Sometimes a different blood thinner will be used instead.

Continue to take Aspirin or Clopidogrel (Plavix) unless your surgeon tells you not to.

## What special instructions do I follow before my surgery?

### On the day before your surgery:



Important!

- Follow any instructions from the Pre-Admission Clinic about bathing or showering.
- Take off your nail polish and make-up.
- Pack only a small bag of toiletries. You may want to bring a toothbrush and toothpaste, hairbrush, soap and shampoo and slippers with you.

### On the night before your surgery:



Important!

- Stop eating and drinking at the time you were told in the Pre-Admission Clinic.
- If you are a smoker, do not smoke after midnight.
- Pack only a small bag of toiletries. You may want to bring a toothbrush and toothpaste, hairbrush, soap and shampoo and slippers with you.

### On the night before your surgery:

- If you have been told to take medication, take it with a small sip of water.

## **What to expect in hospital**

### **Where will I go on the day of my surgery?**

Please arrive 2 hours before your surgery. Take the Eaton or Munk Elevators and go to:

Surgical Admission Unit  
Peter Munk Cardiac Centre – 2nd floor

### **What happens before surgery?**

When you arrive at the **Surgical Admission Unit**:

- A team of surgical nurses will help you get ready for your surgery.
- You will change into a hospital gown.
- An intravenous (IV) will be started in your arm. The IV is used to give you fluids and medication during and after surgery.
- You wait in an area called the Holding Area.
- When it is time for your surgery, you will go to the operating room.

### **Can the time for my surgery change?**

Yes. We do our best to do your surgery at the scheduled time. But, we may need to reschedule your surgery if other emergencies come up. If this happens we will tell you as soon as possible.

## **What happens during surgery?**

- The surgical team helps you move onto the operating table and get comfortable. They will connect monitors, clean your skin and cover your body with drapes.
- The anesthetist gives you a general anesthetic so you will be asleep and not feel any pain.
- A breathing tube is inserted into your throat and into your windpipe to give your lungs air. You are connected to a ventilator machine, which will breathe for you during the procedure.
- Your surgeon makes an incision (cut) in your neck to remove the plaque and repair the artery.
- A drain may be placed in your neck. The drain is a small tube that is put in the neck area to drain any blood into a small palm-size suction bulb. It is removed the morning after the procedure.

## **Will I need a blood transfusion?**

It is rare that you would need a blood transfusion (need to receive more blood) during this type of surgery.

## **Where can my family wait while I am in surgery?**

The surgical waiting room is on the 3rd floor in the Peter Munk Building. Take the Munk elevators to the 3rd floor.

Your family should introduce themselves to the volunteers there. Your surgeon will speak to your family when the surgery is done. If your family will not be in the waiting room, tell your surgeon's office where they can be reached.

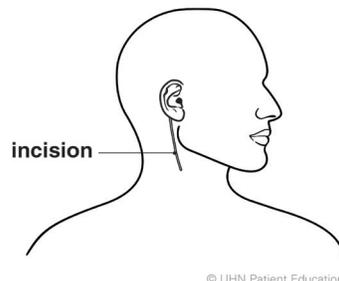
## Where will I go after surgery?

After your surgery, you will go to the Vascular Step-Down Unit, located in the CVICU (Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit, 2nd floor) for 1 night.

Phone: 416 340 3550

## What can I expect after surgery?

- You will have an IV in your vein for fluids and pain medicine.
- You will be attached to a heart monitor to check your heart.
- You will have an incision (cut) in your neck about 10 to 15 cm long. Dissolvable stitches that will disappear over time) are used to close this incision.
- A nurse will check your blood pressure, pulse, temperature and breathing.
- To check the blood flow to your brain the nurse will ask you questions and ask you to do simple things like “squeeze my hand”.
- The nurse will ask you to take deep breaths. This will help to fully open up your lungs.



## How can I expect to feel?

- You will feel sleepy from the anesthetic medicine.
- You may have nausea and upset stomach for about 1 day.
- Your throat may feel sore from the breathing tube you had during surgery. It will feel better in a couple of days.
- Most patients have pain after surgery. You can expect to feel pain in the area you had your surgery. You may also feel stiff and have aches in other areas of your body. Take your pain medicine regularly. This will help you to start moving around sooner.

## What do I need to know about going home?

You should be ready to go home by 11:00 am on your day of discharge. This is usually the day after your surgery. Please arrange for your ride to pick you up by this time.

You will be given:

**1. a discharge letter.** This letter is for you and your family doctor. It has important information, including:

- details of your hospital stay
- test results
- treatments you received
- changes to your medicine
- follow-up instructions

**2. A booklet** “After your Carotid Endarterectomy” which tells you how to take care of yourself at home, what to expect, and when to get help.

Fill your prescription at any pharmacy on your way home.

See your family doctor within 1 week of going home. You should see your Vascular Surgeon in about 6 weeks for follow-up appointment.

## Who to call if you have questions

If you have questions while you are in hospital, please ask your nurse or nurse practitioner, or the doctors on the vascular team.

If you have questions before or after your surgery or need to book your follow up appointment, please call your surgeon's office:

Dr. T. Forbes	416 340 3274
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

Cindy Dickson, Vascular Clinic Nurse: 416 340 3857



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