

Vagal Nerve Stimulator (VNS) Battery Change



TWH

Information for patients going home after day surgery

Read this pamphlet to learn more about:

- What to expect when recovering at home
- How to take care of your incisions
- How to manage your pain
- What to do in case of emergency
- When to visit your neurologist or neurosurgeon



You have had a general anesthetic.

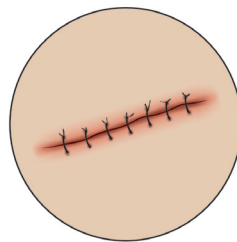
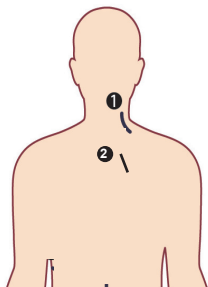
DO NOT drive a car or drink alcohol for 24 hours.

You had your vagal nerve stimulator (VNS) battery changed. We change the battery to make sure the VNS is working properly and helping to control your seizures.

What will my incisions look like?

You will have 2 incisions (surgical cuts). One will be on your neck and the other will be on the upper left side of your chest, above the collarbone. The chest incision is where the surgeon inserted the battery. The surgeon only reopens the chest incision to replace the battery. You may notice a small bulge in that area and a dressing (bandage) covering your chest incision.

1. neck incision
2. chest incision



Changing the VNS battery does not involve surgery to your neck or brain.

An infection in the area of your incisions is not common after this surgery.



If you do get an infection, it is an emergency. Call your neurosurgeon or go to the nearest emergency department if you have any of these signs of infection:

- Fever (temperature **higher** than 38° C or 100° F)
- Redness, swelling or a lot of pain around your incisions
- Pus (yellowish or white liquid) or a bad smell coming from the incisions
- Opening at the edges of the incisions
- Feeling unwell



Food and meals

You may not feel hungry after your surgery. A large meal may not settle well in your stomach. You may also have a sore throat when you swallow for a few days.

- Try eating small meals often until you can eat what you normally would.
- Try to eat different kinds of solid food that are softer and easier to chew such as yogurt, jello, ice cream, mashed potato, pudding, soup and minced foods.
- Avoid eating very hot or spicy foods for 2 days.
- If you feel nauseous (sick to your stomach) or you are vomiting, take anti-nausea medication such as Gravol®. You can buy it from your pharmacy without a prescription. Follow the instructions on the box and keep drinking fluids until your nausea goes away. Then slowly start to eat solid foods again.



How do I care for my wound at home?

- Your stitches will dissolve on their own. You don't need to have them removed by a doctor.
- You can remove your dressing (bandage) 3 days after your surgery. Keep your dressing clean and dry until you remove it.
- If there is clear or bloody fluid on the dressing when you remove it, you can replace it with sterile gauze. You can buy sterile gauze from your pharmacy.



Can I shower or take a bath?

- **Don't wet the incisions for 4 days after your surgery.**
- When you start taking showers, first cover the incisions with plastic wrap to keep them dry. Don't let the incisions get wet for more than a few seconds when showering for 2 weeks after surgery.
- After you shower, gently pat the incisions dry with a clean towel.
- Don't take a bath or soak your incisions in water for the first 4 weeks after surgery.
- Don't put lotion, powder or oil on the incisions for the first 4 weeks. This can cause infection. After 4 weeks you can use vitamin E around the sides of the incisions as long as the incisions stay dry.
- Don't rub or scratch the area around your incisions.



What activities and exercises can I do?

- Do not lift anything heavier than 5 lbs until your neurosurgeon says it's safe.
- Avoid strenuous exercises (like running) and activities such as heavy lifting or high impact sports until your follow-up visit with your neurosurgeon.
- Do not go swimming until your surgeon says it is safe to do so.



When can I return to work?

- Your surgeon will let you know when you can go back to work.



How can I manage my pain at home?

It's normal to have pain after surgery. You may feel more or less pain as you begin to do your everyday activities again. Sometimes pain is better or worse a few days or a week after your surgery. It's normal for the skin around the area of your incisions to tingle or feel prickly as it heals .

To help control the pain:

- We will give you a one-time prescription for pain medication. Fill the prescription at a pharmacy on your way home. Follow the instructions on the bottle.
- Take the pain medication before going for a walk or before the pain becomes very bad. The pain medication lets you exercise and do activities.

Pain medication can make you constipated. To help control it:

- Try to eat fruit and foods with bran.
- Stay hydrated by drinking lots of fluids.
- Take a stool softener every day while you are taking pain medication.
- If you have not had a bowel movement after 1 or 2 days, take a laxative. You can buy this from the pharmacy without a prescription.

Please ask your family doctor for a refill of your pain medication if you need it. **Your neurologist or neurosurgeon will not prescribe a refill of your pain medication.**



Can I take my regular medications?

You can keep taking your regular medications (including seizure medications) as before surgery.

Programming the VNS

Your neurologist will re-activate your VNS about 2 weeks after the surgery in his or her office.



Call your neurologist or go to the Toronto Western Hospital emergency department right away if:

- Stimulation becomes painful or irregular
- Stimulation makes you choke, or makes it hard to breathe or swallow
- Simulation makes your heart beat faster or slower
- You have throat spasms
- You have stronger seizures or you have them more often
- You have new or unusual changes that you think are being caused by stimulation



My follow-up appointments

A follow-up appointment will be booked for you with your **neurologist** about 2 weeks after your surgery to re-activate your VNS. Call your neurologist's office to make an appointment if one is not already made for you.

- Neurologist:**
- D. Andrade 416-603-5927
 - M. del Campo 416-603-5055
 - P. Tai 416-603-5685
 - P. Carlen 416-603-5017
 - R. Wennberg 416-603-5927
 - E. Bui 416-603-5320

Where: Toronto Western Hospital-Neurology Clinic
5th Floor – West Wing

Date: _____ Time: _____

.....

You must have a follow-up appointment with your **neurosurgeon** 4 to 6 weeks after your surgery. Call your neurosurgeon's office to make an appointment:

- Neurosurgeon:**
- Taufik Valiante 416-603-5460
 - Suneil Kalia 416-603-5866

Where: Toronto Western Hospital-Neurosurgery Clinic
4th Floor – West Wing

Date: _____ Time: _____