

Information for
Patients and
Families



The Patient was given the following documents on Jul 13, 2010

**CRANIOTOMY FOR EXCISION OF A CEREBRAL ARTERIOVENOUS MALFORMATION -
Discharge Care, English (SaveNote version)**

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Craniotomy, Discharge Instructions

Please follow the directions listed below following your craniotomy:

Care of Incision

- As the incision heals you may have itching, burning, or numbness around the incision. This is normal during the healing process. Do not pick at your scab or place any ointments or powders on the incision.
- When taking a shower, use a mild shampoo and wash your scalp gently using only your fingertips. You must not scrub your head too vigorously. Gently pat the area around your incision to dry. If you have staples or sutures, these will be removed 10 to 14 days after surgery.
- Special instructions: _____

Activities

- You should resume your normal activities slowly. You will tire easily. Take frequent rest periods when you feel tired. Sleep or rest with your head elevated on pillows.
- Avoid any strenuous activity for four weeks. For exercise, you may walk at a slow to moderate pace.
- Avoid lifting, pushing or pulling anything over ten pounds for four weeks after surgery. Avoid bending over at the waist to pick up things off the floor. This position may place pressure on the brain. If that is not possible, bend your knees and lower yourself to the floor to pick it up.
- For your safety, put non-slip stickers in the tub or shower. Place a mat on the floor to step onto.
- You should not smoke. Continue using your incentive spirometer for a week after surgery.
- Do not drive or return to work until your healthcare practitioner gives you permission.

Diet

- To promote healing, you should eat a well-balanced diet. If you were on a special diet before surgery, you should resume this.
- Do not drink alcohol.
- To prevent constipation, add fruit and fiber to your diet. Drink adequate amounts of fluids.

Seizures

- Anyone who has had brain surgery or brain injury is at risk for having a seizure. Seizures can be small, uncontrolled movements or a whole body convulsion. If this occurs, your caretaker should protect you from injury and call your doctor's office or call "911." During a seizure, do not place anything in the mouth. If you had seizures before surgery, call your healthcare provider if:
 - ✓ There is any change in the type of seizure.

- ✓ You are having seizures more often.
- ✓ There is an increase in the strength of your seizures.

Medications

- You may receive prescriptions for medications. Take these medications exactly as instructed. This is especially important if you received a prescription for:
 - ✓ anticonvulsants (medications that help prevent seizures)
 - ✓ a steroid like dexamethasone (Decadron®), a medication that helps reduce brain swelling.
- You will be given a prescription for medicine to help with pain or discomfort as needed. The discomfort decreases within a few days. You should be able to switch to acetaminophen (Tylenol®), 500 to 1000 mg, every six hours as needed. Do not take more than 4000 mg of acetaminophen in one day.
- You may have problems with constipation. This is due to decreased activity and use of prescription pain medications. Avoid straining while using the toilet as this may increase the pressure inside your head. You may wish to purchase an over-the-counter stool softener such as docusate sodium, or a laxative. Talk to your healthcare practitioner about which medicines he or she recommends.

Follow-up

You will have a follow-up appointment with your neurosurgery healthcare provider in about ten to fourteen days. If you have staples or sutures, these will be removed during your clinic visit. You will receive instructions about how often you need follow-up appointments and MRI or CT scans. You may also be referred to a specialist.

Call 303-724-2305 to schedule a post-operative appointment.

When to contact your Healthcare Provider

Call your healthcare provider immediately if you or your caregiver notices any of the following:

- A temperature of 101 degrees F. (38.5 degrees C.) or more
- Shaking chills
- Difficulty breathing or swallowing
- An increase in headaches, or neck stiffness
- Any trouble with your vision or speech
- Forceful vomiting, or vomiting that won't stop
- Bleeding, increased swelling, redness, or discharge around the area of surgery
- Confusion, restlessness, memory problems, or unusual changes in behavior
- Increasing sleepiness or difficulty waking up
- Problems controlling your bowels or bladder
- Weakness of arms or legs, difficulty walking, pain or swelling in the calf of the leg
- Seizures (uncontrolled movements) of a part of the body or the whole body


You may wish to call your healthcare practitioner if you experience other problems.

If you have any questions or problems call your surgeon's office or the Neurosurgery Department at 303-724-2305, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday.

For emergencies:

After hours and on weekends call 720-848-0000 and ask for the neurosurgery doctor on call. Wait on the phone while the operator pages the doctor. If unable to reach your health-care provider, call the **Emergency Department at 720-848-9111.**

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