

general postoperative instruction sheet



Postoperative Anesthesia

(This section applies only if you have had some form of sedation or general anesthesia.)

After anesthesia, you may feel nauseated and may even experience vomiting for the first 24 hours. You may take the prescribed anti-nausea medication to alleviate your symptoms. If your vomiting persists despite medication, please contact us immediately. You should feel much better by the next day. If you are still suffering nausea and vomiting after the first 2 days, please let us know. If you were sedated or underwent general anesthesia, do not drive or operate any machinery as you may injure yourself or others. Sometimes, the narcotic pain medications you are taking may also cause some upset stomach and/or nausea. Try taking these medications with food, or abstain from taking them if they cause undue nausea and vomiting. It is also natural for you to feel a bit of fatigue for the first 2 to 3 days after surgery as your body recovers from the combined effects of surgery and anesthesia.

Showering and Water Exposure

Please do not get your wound area wet until all bandages have been removed. (If you are having nasal plastic surgery, please follow the bathing directions on that sheet.) If you do not have bandages, please do not shower or get your wound wet for the first 24 hours. After this period of time and after your bandages are off, you may shower and gently dry your wounds. After the first day, you may gently wash your face with mild soap and water. Try to avoid any vigorous cleaning of the suture line.

Wound Care

1. The suture line should be cleaned 2 to 3 times daily with a q-tip or cotton ball soaked in hydrogen peroxide. (Be careful near the hairline if you have dark hair to avoid bleaching the hair.) Again, care should be taken as the sutures are delicate and can be broken if vigorously cleaned. Blot dry and apply an antibiotic ointment, such as Bacitracin, to the wound edges with a clean q-tip so that a crust (scab) does not have a chance to form. Any over-the-counter antibiotic ointments will suffice (Bacitracin or Neosporin). If you develop a red, itchy, blistery area after you apply the antibiotic ointment, stop applying it as a small percentage of patients may develop an allergic reaction to it. Also you may refrain from applying any ointment at night so as not to soil your bed sheets. Try to use a q-tip or cotton ball instead of your fingers when applying ointment, because your fingers may be dirty and cause an infection in your suture line.
2. Apply ice packs over the wound for the first 24 to 48 hours as it will significantly reduce your postoperative swelling and cut down on your recovery time. (If you had nasal plastic surgery, application of ice may loosen the splint and/or adhesive due to the moisture that develops and therefore is not advised unless Dr. Lam informed you otherwise.) You may apply ice every 20 minutes to one hour as it is convenient. After the first 2 days, ice packing will not lessen any swelling. Never use hot packs on your face (see point #4 below).

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3. Sleeping at night with your head elevated with a couple of pillows will also help reduce the amount of swelling and reduce your recovery time. Sleep on your back or side only.
4. Avoid any hot packs to your face as you may burn yourself unknowingly. After your surgery, your wound area will be numb for several weeks, and you may burn yourself if you apply too hot an object (such as a curling iron to your hair or even if you blow dry your hair) near or on your operated skin.
5. For men, shaving over the operated area must be avoided for the first 2 weeks. All facial shaving should be avoided after a facelift for the requisite two weeks. Thereafter, shaving with an electric razor very gently for 2 more weeks is important. After a total of one month following surgery, you may resume normal shaving.
6. If you routinely wear make-up, please refrain from doing so for at least the first week after surgery. Make-up may cause significant irritation to the skin and also adversely affect your wound healing. Further, perfumes and colognes may irritate your wounds, so try to minimize or abstain from using these kinds of products near your wounds during the first week as well. If you had a brow lift or facelift, or any surgery near the hairline, please postpone any planned permanent waves or hair coloring for four weeks following surgery.
7. When your sutures have been removed, you should stop applying Bacitracin and peroxide. *USE OF PEROXIDE BEYOND THIS PERIOD WILL IMPAIR WOUND HEALING AND MAY CONTRIBUTE TO WOUND SEPARATION AND/OR INFECTION.* (However, peroxide use during the first week is important to help with wound healing.)
8. Avoid any excessive rubbing or scratching of the wound area as this may disrupt the suture line or cause darkening of your skin. If you should have severe itchiness around the wound area, contact us immediately so that we may prescribe a medication to alleviate your symptoms.
9. Sometimes deeper clear sutures that are used to hold the deeper portion of the skin together may poke through the skin. Please leave them alone and come into Dr. Lam's office to have them trimmed back. All these clear sutures will dissolve by themselves after a few weeks to months.
10. If any incisions become thicker or enlarged after several weeks to months, you must contact Dr. Lam so that he can treat you. That is why Dr. Lam has regularly schedule postoperative visits (at no charge) to make sure that you are doing well. Although this is very rare to have a thickened scar, Dr. Lam can help to make this condition better, especially if you seek care early.

Antibiotics

If we prescribed antibiotics, please take them as directed. It is recommended that you take your antibiotics with food to minimize any chance of an upset stomach. If you are nauseated, please wait until the nausea has subsided before resuming your antibiotics. If you develop diarrhea, please stop taking your antibiotics, and inform the office that you are doing so. If your diarrhea should persist, please contact us immediately regarding this matter. If you should develop a fever (> 100.5) after the first 2 days, please let us know as well. ***If you a female, it may be a good idea to purchase yogurt with ACIDOPHILUS at Whole Foods that is a natural way to counter the chance of a yeast infection during the time you are on antibiotics.***

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Pain Management

If you have discomfort after surgery, please take the prescribed pain medication as needed. *IF YOU DEVELOP ANY SUDDEN UNEXPLAINED PAIN OR HAVE SIGNIFICANT DISCOMFORT, YOU SHOULD REPORT THIS TO US IMMEDIATELY.* Please be sure to take your pain medication not more frequently than prescribed. Also, as this medication is a narcotic, you are advised against driving or operating any machinery while taking your pain medication. Further, you should not partake of any alcohol when using narcotic pain medications. If you have only mild pain, you may take plain Tylenol to alleviate your symptoms. However, if you take plain Tylenol you should wait four hours before resuming your other pain medications as they frequently already have Tylenol in them, and you do not want to overdose on Tylenol. You should also avoid taking any other pain medications, especially aspirin or aspirin-related products (See the Preoperative Instruction Sheet for a partial list of aspirin and aspirin-related medications).

ROUTINE USE OF NARCOTIC MEDICATION MAY CAUSE CONSTIPATION. IF YOU ARE TAKING PAIN MEDICATION EVERY 3 TO 4 HOURS AND EITHER ARE PREDISPOSED TO CONSTIPATION OR BEGINNING TO EXPERIENCE CONSTIPATION, PLEASE OBTAIN AN OVER-THE-COUNTER STOOL SOFTENER, LIKE COLACE, OR CONTACT THE OFFICE FOR FURTHER DIRECTIONS.

Bruising and Swelling

It is normal that you have moderate or even significant bruising and swelling after surgery for the first 2 weeks. Because Dr. Lam is very gentle handed, your swelling and bruising most likely will not be very considerable and will differ among patients depending on your anatomy and the precise procedures you have undergone. You will notice that the swelling *WILL INCREASE AFTER* the first 2 to 3 days after surgery, which is normal *UNLESS IT IS ACCOMPANIED BY SIGNIFICANT PAIN AND DISCOMFORT IN WHICH CASE DR. LAM SHOULD BE CONTACTED IMMEDIATELY, ESPECIALLY IF THE SWELLING OCCURS DURING THE DAY OF SURGERY AND, AS MENTIONED IS ACCOMPANIED BY PAIN AND DISCOMFORT.* After the first 2 to 3 days, bruising and swelling will diminish and should be 80 to 90% resolved within the first 2 weeks. It may take several months for a little of the remaining swelling to resolve but this residual swelling should generally not be socially unacceptable. During the first 2 weeks, all swelling works its way down by gravity, and you will notice that swelling will often become worse in the chin and neck area before it is completely absorbed by the lymphatic system in the neck. Dr. Lam will employ his laser at 5 to 7 days to greatly reduce or eliminate your bruising within 48 hours typically. He waits until 5 to 7 days have gone by so that the bruise is more mature and the laser can work more effectively. There is no extra cost for this service. He typically would like to see you at 1 week to evaluate your result and to treat any bruising as necessary. If you have any concerns or questions, never hesitate to contact Dr. Lam.

Sun Exposure

Excessive exposure to sun in the first 3 weeks after surgery may result in prolonged facial swelling and injury to the skin. Also, excessive sun exposure to your wound area may cause your wound to darken (hyperpigment) in relation to the surrounding skin. If you must go into the sunlight, wear a wide-brimmed hat and apply one of the SPF 30 sun-block preparations, preferably with titanium dioxide or zinc oxide, available at your pharmacy or at our clinic. Typically, if an incision should turn darker, it does so 3 to 5 weeks after surgery. Almost always, this darker coloration will dissipate over the coming weeks to months. If you do develop darkening along the incision line and would like to expedite its resolution, please make an appointment at the office to purchase a prescription-based lightening cream that will help with this problem.

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Exercise & Activity

For the first 2 weeks, please refrain from bending over or straining very hard. If you are constipated, please inform us so that we may prescribe you a laxative. It is acceptable to begin light walking 24 hours after surgery. Jogging and light non-contact exercise should not be resumed until 2 weeks, whereas strenuous sports require 6 weeks of healing before being safely resumed. If you feel that you are too weak to perform a given activity, then you should listen to your body and rest appropriately. Remember your body is healing and some of your energy is expended in the healing process.

Other Things to Avoid

Please reread the Preoperative Instruction Sheet carefully and review all the medications, vitamins, and herbal supplements that you should avoid before and after surgery, including the advice about smoking and drinking. If you should have any questions about your surgery or about any of the instructions written above, please do not hesitate to contact us.