

## Patient Discharge Instructions Following **Craniotomy**

- DIET:** You may resume the type of diet you had before surgery. Eating a well-balanced diet is important for proper wound healing. The doctor or nurse will let you know if you need a specific diet or food consistency.
- MEDICATIONS:** Your doctor will provide you with prescriptions for the medication you are to take at home. You may fill your prescriptions at the UCLA Outpatient Pharmacy on B level and pick them up on your way out, or you can have them filled at a pharmacy closer to your home. In order to facilitate your discharge, it is helpful for us to know which location you would prefer. Before your discharge, your nurse will review with you and write down your medication dosage, schedule, and side effects. It is important to take your medications as ordered and try to stay on schedule. Do not take aspirin or blood thinners unless ordered or cleared by your surgeon.
- COMFORT AND PAIN MANAGEMENT:** It is common to have a headache/pain after surgery, which may last a few days or a few weeks. You will have pain medications prescribed by your doctor for your pain management. The medication may be irritating to the stomach lining, it is advisable to take it with a teaspoon of applesauce or non-fat yogurt. Pain medication (narcotics) may cause constipation. Use a stool softener or gentle laxative if this occurs. If the medications are ineffective, call your doctor's office to discuss on-going pain management.  
  
Eye/facial swelling is common after surgery and may take a few days to a week to disappear. Bruising may occur and will take one to two weeks to resolve. You may feel better if you sleep with two pillows under your head; keeping your head elevated will help reduce facial swelling.
- EXPECTATIONS FOR HOME:** You should clarify who will be picking you up on the day of your discharge (before 11 am). If you are returning home, please confirm who will be picking you up and who will be there for you when you return home.
- OVERVIEW OF DAILY ACTIVITIES:** You may feel more tired for 1-3 weeks after surgery. Get plenty of rest. Make a point of doing gentle activity, such as walking, each day. When you see your surgeon in the follow-up appointment, he or she will discuss decreasing the limits on activity at that time. You may resume sexual intimacy when you feel well enough, but do not overexert yourself. **You must have clearance from your doctor before doing heavy exercises/activity.**
- ANY RESTRICTIONS:** Avoid straining, bending at the waist, high impact exercise such as running and heavy lifting (over 10 pounds) for at least 2 weeks after surgery.
- RESUME TO WORK/DRIVING/AIR TRAVEL:** **You must have clearance from your doctor before returning to work, driving a car, or flying.** This will be discussed at your postoperative visit.

- WOUND/SUTURE CARE:** You will probably be discharged with our sutures/staples still in place. You may shower or bathe within 24 hours after surgery, however do not get your incision(s) wet until 4 days after surgery. We recommend that you shower with someone in the bathroom to assist you. Wash, do not scrub your incision. Do not immerse your head underwater. Your incision may be open to air; however you may cover the incision with a clean cap, scarf or hat.

If you have an abdominal or thigh incision, keep area clean and open to air. Cover with plastic wrap before showering. The "Steri-strips" on the incision will come off on their own. You may gently wash your abdominal or thigh incision with soap and water 4 days after your surgery.

You will be asked to return to the UCLA Neurosurgery Suture Removal Clinic in 10-14 days for removal (however 14-21 days if this is a second surgery going through the same skin incision). You will be provided with a handout explaining when and where to go. If you live far from UCLA, you may have your primary care physician remove your sutures/staples – Please discuss this with your physician and his team while in hospital.

- FOLLOW-UP APPOINTMENT:** Your discharge paperwork will include information on who, when, and how to contact your physician after discharge. You will be responsible for setting up your own follow up appointment.

- REHABILITATION NEEDS:** If indicated, our rehabilitation professional will assess you prior to your discharge. We will order any rehabilitation needs and equipment prior to your discharge.

- DANGER SIGNS TO WATCH FOR AT HOME:**

**Call your doctor if any of these danger signals occur:**

- Onset of severe, persistent headache not relieved by medication and rest
- Onset of increased drowsiness, confusion
- Onset of nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Onset or worsening of visual problems
- Onset or worsening of speech problems
- Onset of or increased weakness, numbness or tingling
- Onset of or worsening of seizures
- Onset of fever with more than 101°F, persistent chills, or stiff neck
- Any redness, drainage, heat or pain, or increased swelling around your incision
- Onset of shortness of breath, chest pain, one-sided leg pain or swelling

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Care coordinator's office phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

During working hours, your surgeon's office will be able to answer your questions.

UCLA page operator: **310-825-6301** - Ask to have the neurosurgical resident on call contacted for urgent questions after hours or on a weekend.