

Barrow Hypothalamic Hamartoma Center Discharge Instructions

All patients will receive a discharge summary for follow-up care and other vital medical records when they arrive in Dr. Rekate's clinic as well as copies of all of their pre-operative and post-operative MRI images.

Recovery

Although specific instructions will be provided to you at the time of hospital discharge this document is intended to give you general guidelines and prepare you for recovery.

Follow-up with your physicians

An appointment should be scheduled with the neurosurgeon ten to fourteen days after the surgery to remove sutures, evaluate the surgical site and assess your recovery. Before the appointment write down any questions you may have to ensure that all of your concerns are addressed. Special accommodations can be made for patients traveling from out of state. Write down any instructions that your physician gives you such as the need for an annual check-up, future x-rays, or other time-sensitive tests.

Activity

Patients recover at various rates from neurosurgical procedures and are encouraged to honor their physical and emotional limitations. Resume normal daily activities after six weeks. Ask your surgeon for specific limitations on weight lifting, swimming and any other activity involving great physical exertion. Exercise gradually with activities such as walking rather than aggressive gym activities. Driving is not recommended until the patient has complete awareness of their surroundings and has total control over their motor skills.

Do not immerse the surgical sites in any body of water until the sutures are removed and cleared by your surgeon. Showering is appropriate upon release by the surgical team. Avoid direct firm pressure on the face for at least 4 weeks.

Medication

Prescriptions for pain control and other medications are provided at discharge. You may not feel that it is necessary to have these prescriptions filled right away, but it is important that your medications be available if the need arises. Discuss the possible interactions between various medications that you are taking with your physicians. Avoid drinking alcohol, driving, and operating heavy machinery while taking medication for pain.

Social Services

The hospital's case management department and social workers are available to help you identify needs that you may have after discharge from the hospital. These needs may range from renting wheelchairs to arranging home health care and outpatient therapies. Please ask to speak to one of these individuals before the day of discharge. Remember to take all of your belongings with you and to tell your friends and family that you have been discharged from the hospital.

Infection

Report signs and symptoms of infection to the surgeon immediately if any of the following occur: sudden increase in swelling at the surgical site after the swelling had begun to subside, fever or chills, colored drainage from incision, or a temp. >101 without other signs of illness. Pink skin is indicative of the healing process where as reddened areas may be a sign of infection.

Keep fingernails trimmed short to decrease risk of incision irritation and infection from scratching as healing occurs.

Diet

Frequent small meals (4 – 6 per day) are suggested with a moderate amount of protein in each to assist in healing process. Avoid straining hard for bowel movements for 3 months. Use stool softeners immediately after surgery and include plenty of fluids and fiber in diet. Contact your primary care physician to help manage constipation problems.

Wound care

- Avoid peroxide for incisions closed with absorbable suture as it will cause too rapid of breakdown of suture. Clean with soap and running water.
- Keep incision free of dried blood, crusting or scabbing to decrease risk of infection and minimize the scar.
- Begin daily hair washing with mild shampoo and conditioner (to ease the tangles) when cleared by surgical team.
- Use caution when the combing hair. Vigorous rubbing can disrupt the sutures.
- If a nylon suture is used for the skin closure the surgeon will remove them during the post-operative visit to the clinic after hospital discharge (within ten to fourteen days following surgery).

When to call your physician

Feelings of depression are temporary and common following any surgical procedure. Please contact your physician if you have any lingering concerns about this. The following symptoms warrant a call to your surgeon:

- Signs of infection (noted above) are thought to be present
- Sutures come apart
- Persistent headaches not relieved with over the counter medication
- Confusion
- Nausea/vomiting
- If you have any questions