

# Discharge Instructions for Carotid Endarterectomy



A carotid endarterectomy restores normal blood flow through the vessels that carry blood to your brain. These vessels are called the carotid arteries. During the surgery, a surgeon made a small incision in the side of your neck, just below your jaw. The artery was opened and the blockage was cleared. This procedure was done to reduce your risk of a stroke. A stroke can occur when the carotid arteries are severely blocked or narrowed.



## Home care

- Spend your first few days after surgery resting at home. You can do quiet activities such as reading or watching TV.
- Take your medicines exactly as instructed. Don't skip doses.
- Check your incision every day for signs of infection. These include redness, swelling, drainage, or warmth.
- Keep the wound dry until your healthcare provider says it's OK to shower. Don't scrub your incision.
- Shave carefully around your incision. You may want to use an electric razor.
- Know that you may have some loss of feeling along your jaw line, the incision line, and earlobe. This is a result of the incision. Feeling should come back in 6 to 12 months.
- Slowly increase your activity. It may take some time for you to return to your normal activities.
- Don't do strenuous activity for 7 to 10 days after your surgery.
- Don't lift anything heavier than 10 pounds for 2 to 3 weeks after your surgery.
- Don't drive until your healthcare provider says it's OK. This will most likely be 1 to 2 weeks.
- Ask your healthcare provider when you can expect to return to work.

## Long-term changes at home

- Eat a healthy diet. Make sure your diet is low in fat, cholesterol, and calories. Ask your healthcare provider for menus and other diet help.
- Maintain a healthy body weight.
- After you recover from surgery, try to exercise more. Do as much walking as you can. Ask your healthcare provider for more tips.
- If you smoke, ask your healthcare provider for help quitting.

## Follow-up care

Make a follow-up appointment as directed.

## When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of the following:

- Neck swelling
- Redness, pain, swelling, or fluid from your incision
- Fever above 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as directed by your healthcare provider

## When to call 911

A stroke is a medical emergency. Call 911 right away if you have any of these symptoms of a stroke:

- Weakness, tingling, or loss of feeling on one side of your face or body
- Sudden double vision or trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble talking or slurred speech
- Sudden, severe headache

**B.E. F.A.S.T.** is an easy way to remember the signs of a stroke. When you see these signs, call 911 fast.

**B.E. F.A.S.T.** stands for:

- **B** is for **balance**. Sudden loss of balance or coordination.
- **E** is for **eyes**. Vision changes in one or both eyes.
- **F** is for **face drooping**. One side of the face is drooping or numb. When the person smiles, the smile is uneven.
- **A** is for **arm weakness**. One arm is weak or numb. When the person lifts both arms at the same time, one arm may drift downward.
- **S** is for **speech difficulty**. You may notice slurred speech or trouble speaking. The person can't repeat a simple sentence correctly when asked.
- **T** is for **time to call 911**. If someone shows any of these symptoms, even if they go away, call 911 right away. Make note of the time the symptoms first appeared.

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