

Carotid Endarterectomy

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This is general information. Please see your After Visit Summary for how to take care of yourself after surgery.

Your health care team will work with you to understand any challenges you have after your hospital stay. This will help your team work toward a plan to make sure you have the right care and support to help manage your health after you leave the hospital.

Your Surgery

The carotid artery is a blood vessel that carries blood to your brain. If it becomes blocked, the result can be a stroke and transient ischemic attacks (“mini-strokes” lasting less than 24 hours).

When the blood can’t flow to your brain, your brain cells start to die.

A carotid endarterectomy is surgery that removes plaque (hardened fat) from your carotid artery. This helps to resume or improve blood flow to your brain and reduce your risk of a stroke.

Signs of Stroke

Call 911 right away if you have any of these signs or symptoms of a stroke:

- sudden or temporary weakness or numbness
- blurred vision or dimness
- confusion

- trouble speaking or understanding
- loss of balance or clumsiness
- sudden severe headache.

Before the Surgery

- If it applies, tell your doctor if you:
 - are pregnant
 - have a latex allergy
 - have diabetes
 - take a blood-thinner medicine.
- Remove any jewelry or piercings.

Your Incision

- Your incision is located on the side of your neck. Remove the gauze dressing tomorrow and replace it with clean gauze if the incision is oozing.
- Clean the incision every day with mild soap and water.
- Change the dressing over the tube site as needed until the drainage stops in a day or two. Leave the rest of the incision open to air.
- Steri-Strips® (paper-like tape) may have been placed on your incision. They can get wet in the shower. You may peel them off after 7 days.
- If you have staples, follow your doctor’s directions.
- Follow any directions your doctor gives you.

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What To Expect After Surgery

- You may be numb around the incision site for several months after surgery. This is common.

Activity

- Your doctor will tell you when it's OK for you to shower, drive, return to work and have sex.
- Slowly return to your regular level of activity.
- Follow your doctor's directions for how much you can safely lift.
- Rest as needed.
- Avoid tobacco and secondhand smoke. They can slow your recovery.

Pain Relief

- Take any prescription or over-the-counter medicine as directed.

Food and Beverages

- Eat well-balanced meals. Follow any instructions your doctor gave you.
- Drink more liquids.
- Avoid alcohol while you are taking prescription pain medicine.

When To Call Your Doctor

Call your doctor if you:

- have new pain or pain you can't control
- have a temperature higher than 101 F
- feel dizzy or lightheaded that won't stop
- have signs of infection at your incision site:
 - pain
 - swelling
 - redness
 - odor
 - warmth
 - green or yellow discharge
- have problems breathing
- are unable to get out of bed
- have nausea (upset stomach) and vomiting (throwing up) that won't stop
- have any questions or concerns.

Lifestyle Changes

Your doctor or nurse will talk with you about your personal needs and lifestyle change recommendations. It's important that you control your risks for stroke.

Follow-up Appointment

Please keep all follow-up appointments with your doctor or specialist, even if you are feeling well.