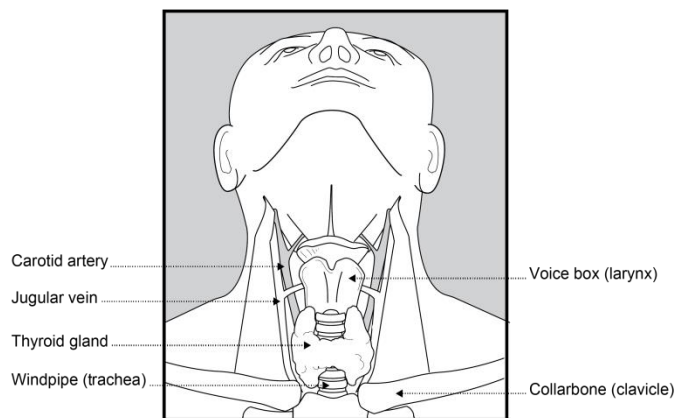


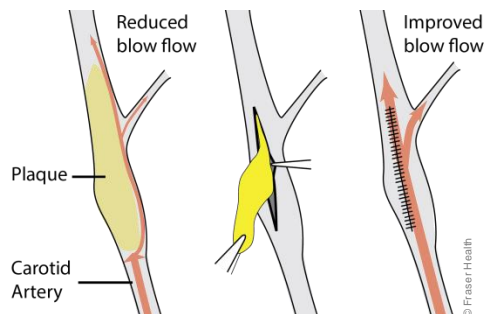
Carotid Artery Surgery

Your Surgery and Recovery at Home

You are having surgery to remove plaque (say *plak*) of fat and other deposits blocking your carotid artery. Your carotid artery is the main artery in your neck that supplies blood to your brain. These deposits could break free and flow into the brain causing a stroke or mini stroke.



This surgery is done to help reduce the chances of you having a stroke or mini stroke in the future. The medical term for this surgery is 'carotid endarterectomy' (say *en-dart-er-eck-toe-mee*).



The surgeon makes a cut (an incision) at the front of your neck to open the artery. After removing the block, the surgeon closes the artery with stitches. Sometimes a patch or graft is needed to help close the artery.

Appointments after surgery

See your surgeon _____ weeks after surgery.

My appointment is on: _____

See your family practitioner* in _____ weeks.

My appointment is on: _____

The surgery usually takes 1 to 2 hours.

You usually go home 1 to 3 days after the surgery. It depends on your health before surgery and your recovery.

Going home checklist

- You have a ride home and someone to stay with you for 24 hours, or longer if needed.
- You know what medicine(s) to take, as well as when and how to take them.

Caring for Yourself at Home

Drinking and Eating

Return to your normal diet.

Drink plenty of fluids (unless you have been told differently because of a medical condition).

You can get constipated if you are less active, eating less fibre, or taking opioid pain medication. To prevent constipation:

- Drink water throughout the day.
- Eat high fibre foods such as bran, prunes, whole grains, vegetables, and fruit.
- Walk and move around as much as you can.

If you continue to be constipated, talk with a pharmacist or family practitioner (family doctor or nurse practitioner) about taking a laxative.

Your incision

Always wash your hands before and after touching around your incision.

You can shower. Do not scrub your incision, just let the water run over the incision. Dry it well after.

Until the incision is healed:

- * No soaking up to your neck in a bath tub or hot tub.
- * No swimming.
- * No creams, lotions, or ointments on the incision (unless directed by your surgeon).

If you have staples closing your incision, your family doctor can take them out. Check with your surgeon.

Activity and Rest

Balance activity and rest for the first few days.

Try to get 8 hours of sleep each day. Take rest breaks during the day, as needed.

Do not drive or drink alcohol if you are taking an opioid medication.

Do not lift anything heavier than 5 kgs (10 lbs) until your surgeon tells you it is safe – can be for up to 4 weeks. Lifting heavy items can put stress and strain on your incision.

Do not drive until you have seen your surgeon at your appointment after surgery and told it is okay to drive. You must be able to do a shoulder check.

Return to sexual activity when you feel ready.

Most people are able to return to work within 3 to 4 weeks. Check with your surgeon.

Managing pain

You might have a sore throat for a few days. You can expect your incision to be sore for about a week. You might notice some bruising and swelling. This is normal.

If you have been living with pain before surgery, be sure to tell your surgeon how you manage this pain, such as with medicines, herbs, supplements, cannabis products, other substances, massage, yoga, meditation, etc. This helps your surgeon create the best plan with you for managing pain after surgery.

Your surgeon gives you instructions to take pain medicine. This might include a prescription for an opioid (narcotic).

Your pain should be at a comfortable level that allows you to move, take deep breaths, cough, and to do every day activities.

Take your pain medicine regularly for the first day or so, even if you have just a little pain. Also, do other things to help ease your pain or distract you from the pain, such as slow breathing, listening to music, watching T.V.

Non-prescription pain medicines:

- acetaminophen (Tylenol®)
- non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)
Examples: ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®)
naproxen (Naprosyn, Aleve®)

NSAIDs are not for everyone after surgery. If you have (or have had) health problems such as stomach ulcers, kidney disease, or a heart condition, speak with your surgeon or family practitioner before using NSAIDs.

Prescription pain medicines with opioids (narcotics):

- Tramacet® (tramadol and acetaminophen)
- Tylenol #3® (codeine and acetaminophen)
- Oxycocet® / Percocet® (oxycodone and acetaminophen)

Note: These medications also have 300 to 325mg acetaminophen in each tablet. All total, **do not** take more than 4000mg of acetaminophen in 24 hours (too much can harm your liver).

Safe use of opioid pain medicines

If you are using any medicines that have opioids (narcotics) in them, take note of the following safety information.

- Tell your surgeon if you have sleep apnea. Opioids can make your sleep apnea worse.
- Your pain should lessen over the first week. You should not need to take opioid pain medicine for more than 1 week.
- Always use the least amount possible for the shortest amount of time.
- Common side effects include constipation, feeling sick to your stomach (nausea), a dry mouth, sweating, dizziness, and feeling drowsy.
- **Do not** crush, cut, break, chew, or dissolve opioids before taking. Doing this could cause serious harm, even death.
- While taking opioid pain medicines, **do not** drive, drink alcohol, or start taking any new sleeping pills.
- Store opioid medicines in a secure place. Keep out of sight and out of reach of children, teens, and pets.
- Never share your opioid medicine with anyone else.
- Take any unused opioid medicines back to your pharmacy to be safely disposed.
Do not keep unused medicines at home.

Always read the label and/or information from the pharmacist about how to take medication safely.

Questions about medications? Speak to your local pharmacist. After-hours, call 8-1-1 and ask to speak to a pharmacist.

When to get help

Watch for signs of a stroke.

Face	Is it drooping?
Arms	Can you raise both arms?
Speech	Is it slurred or jumbled?
Time	Call 9-1-1 right away.

Call your surgeon or family practitioner

if you have any of the following:

- a headache that does not go away, and does not ease with pain medicine
- nausea or throwing up not going away
- any **new** problems swallowing food or saliva (spit)
- chills or a fever over 38°C (101°F)
- warm, red, swollen incision, or blood or pus (yellow/green fluid) draining from the incision

Can't contact your surgeon or family practitioner?
Have any questions about your recovery?

- **Call Fraser Health Virtual Care**

10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., daily

1-800-314-0999

fraserhealth.ca/virtualcare

- **Call 8-1-1** (HealthLinkBC) to speak to a registered nurse any time - day or night.

HealthLinkBC is available in 130 languages.

For an interpreter, say your language in English. Wait until an interpreter comes on the phone.

- **Call 9-1-1** if you have any:

- trouble breathing or shortness of breath
- chest pain
- sudden severe pain

Questions you might have:
