

Cranioplasty

Your Surgery and Recovery at Home

Royal Columbian Hospital

Cranioplasty (say *krane-ee-oh-plas-tee*) is the repair of a bone defect or deformity in the skull from previous operation or injury.

There are different ways of doing the repair but most involve lifting the scalp and restoring the shape of the skull. The repair could be done with either the original bone or a custom graft made from material such as titanium, synthetic bone, or acrylic.

You usually go home 1 to 3 days after surgery. This will depend on your recovery and your health before surgery.

Appointments after surgery

See your family practitioner.

My appointment is on: _____

See your surgeon.

My appointment is on: _____

If staples are closing your incision, you will be told when and where to get them removed.

Going home checklist

- You have a ride home and someone to stay with you, if needed.
- You know what medicine(s) to take, as well as when and how to take them. You might be on new medication because of your surgery.

Caring for Yourself at Home

Drinking and Eating

Return to your diet.

You might get constipated because you are less active or eating less fibre. To prevent constipation:

- Drink at least 6 to 8 glasses of liquid each day (unless you have been told differently because of a medical condition).
- 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 about taking a laxative.

Activity and Rest

Balance your activity and rest for the first few days. You will be tired and it is common to feel the need for a rest in the afternoon. We suggest you take short naps throughout the day. Try to get at least 8 hours of sleep each day.

Until you see your neurosurgeon, **do not** lift, push, or pull anything over 5 kilograms (10 pounds) including carrying children and groceries.

Do not drive until your neurosurgeon says you are ready. Most people are not allowed to drive for at least 3 months.

Family Practitioner: Refers to family doctor or nurse practitioner

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This information does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.

Cranioplasty - continued

Managing pain

You might have headaches once in a while. These will improve and go away with time.

Your surgeon gives you instructions to take pain medicine. This is usually for non-prescription (over the counter) pain medication such as acetaminophen (Tylenol[®]) or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs★ (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen (Advil[®], Motrin[®]) or 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.

If your pain is at an uncomfortable level, take your pain medicine as directed. As your pain improves, take your pain medicine less often and/or a smaller amount until you have little or no pain, then stop.

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

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

Your incision

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

You might have some swelling of your scalp. This will go away with time. To reduce the swelling:

- Sleep with your head up on a couple of pillows.
- Put an ice pack into a pillow case and place on your scalp for 10 to 15 minutes every 2 to 3 hours. (Never put an ice pack directly on your skin.)

For the first 5 days, take only sponge baths or baths. You can shower and wash your hair starting 5 days after your surgery. If you have staples closing your incision, gently wash the hair around your incision. Gently pat the area dry.

Until the incision is healed: No swimming; no soaking in a hot tub or bath; and no creams, lotions, or ointments on the incision (unless directed by your surgeon).

When to get help

Call your surgeon or family practitioner

if you have any of the following:

- a headache not going away or getting worse
- increasingly weak or fatigued
- a fever over 38°C (101°F)
- warm, red, swollen incision, or blood or pus (yellow/green fluid) draining from the area
- pain does not ease with pain medicine
- redness, tenderness, or pain in your calf or lower leg
- throwing up or have diarrhea often
- increasingly tired or dizzy

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

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

Call 9-1-1 if you have any of the following:

- trouble breathing or shortness of breath
- chest pain
- any sudden severe pain
- extremely sleepy or drowsy
- trouble walking and this is new for you
- any sudden or gradual change for the worse in your thinking, speech, movements, touch, vision, taste, smell, sleeping or waking

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