

Information for patients

Craniofacial resection

What is a craniofacial resection?

This is an operation that allows doctors to remove your sinus/nasal tumour by making a cut along your nose and along your hairline.

What happens before my surgery?

Before surgery, some patients attend a pre-admission clinic where the doctor will explain the surgery and you will sign a consent form.

At the clinic, the health care team will ask you about your health, medication and lifestyle. They may test your blood, take x-rays and an electrocardiogram (ECG).

Your doctor will talk to you about what medications to take before you come to hospital. It is important to tell your doctor if you are taking any blood thinning medications, such as aspirin, warfarin or clopidogrel (Plavix).

Please bring your medications to hospital with you.

If you use a dosette box or pill organiser to take your tablets, please ask your pharmacist to print out a list of your current medications so you can bring this to hospital.

If you do not need to attend the pre-admission clinic, we will telephone you and tell you when your surgery is scheduled and what to bring to hospital. You may also receive a letter informing you of your time and date of surgery.

Please make sure you confirm your date for surgery.

The day before your surgery, the hospital will call you between 2.30pm and 7pm to inform you of the time you need to stop eating and drinking and what time to come to hospital.

The doctor may also request that you see a speech pathologist before the operation to receive a voice assessment.

What will happen on the day of my surgery?

We ask that you shower before you come into hospital and remove jewellery, make up, nail polish and fake nails. It is advised that you leave valuables such as jewellery and large sums of money at home to decrease the possibility of items being misplaced or stolen.

On the day of your surgery, please make your way to the St Vincent's Day of Surgery Admission (DOSA) area, which is located on the first floor of the In-patient Services Building, Princes Street, Fitzroy.

When you arrive the nursing staff will check your pulse and blood pressure.

You will need an anaesthetic for your surgery. The anaesthetist (the doctor who will give you the anaesthetic) will meet with you before your surgery to talk to you about your health and the best type of anaesthetic for you.

A general anaesthetic (anaesthetic to put you to sleep) is normally used for this procedure.

St Vincent's is a busy hospital so please be aware that you may need to wait up to three hours for your operation.

What happens during the surgery?

The surgeon will make an incision along your hairline at your forehead and also down one side of your nose. They will cut through until they have a clear view of the tumour or sinuses. When they have done this, the surgeon will remove the tumour.

Depending on where the tumour is, you may need to have reconstructive surgery to fill up the space where the tumour has been. If this is the case, the plastic surgeons will take over and perform a free flap operation (please see fact sheet on free flap for more information).

After your operation, it is likely you will be quite swollen in the head/face so a tracheostomy will be inserted during the operation to help you breathe for the first few days after the operation.

A tracheostomy is an opening into the trachea (airway) at the base of your neck that is held open by a small plastic tube. This is inserted to make a clear airway, allowing nurses to help remove any secretions and reduce your anxiety levels.

What happens after the surgery?

You will wake up from the anaesthetic in the recovery room and be transferred to your ward shortly after. A nurse will monitor your blood pressure, pulse, temperature and oxygen levels regularly.

They will also ask you questions about the date, where you are and what your name is. This will continue when you get back to the ward every hour for 24 hours. This close monitoring is an important part of your recovery after surgery.

There will be an intravenous (IV) drip in your arm to provide you with fluids until you are able to eat and drink.

Your pain may be treated in a number of ways. This will be decided by you, your doctors and nurses depending on the type of pain you have. You may be given tablets or an injection to help you feel better.

You will also receive oxygen that is warmed and moistened to help with your breathing. The tracheostomy tube will be removed after the swelling has gone down and the nurses will dress the small wound until it heals over.

You may not be able to talk with a tracheostomy tube as air cannot pass via your voice box to produce a sound. This can be frustrating but the nurses and speech pathologist will make sure you have ways to communicate.

Nursing staff will make sure your call bell is in reach at all times. You may:

- gesture, point or mouth words quietly
- use a special communication board that has common words
- request a note pad or white board to write on.

You will need to rest in bed for the first 24 hours after your operation, then the nurses and physiotherapist will assist you to sit out of bed for short periods.

Whilst you are in bed, it is important to avoid crossing your legs and to move them regularly. The physiotherapist will also give you deep breathing

exercises to do every hour. The amount of activity you do will be increased slowly until you are able to walk around the ward without assistance.

When can I go home?

Most people stay in hospital for between seven to ten days for this type of surgery. Patients are usually discharged at 10am so the room can be prepared for another patient.

Before you leave the ward someone will:

- make a follow-up appointment at St Vincent's Specialist Clinics for you
- send a letter to your local doctor (GP)
- give you medication, if the doctor prescribes it
- give you a medical certificate if needed (you will need to ask).

Please remember to take all your belongings including x-rays home with you.

What should I do once I get home?

Your doctor may recommend a further two weeks off work after the operation to give your body the best chance of recovery.

You should avoid doing any strenuous activity, especially lifting anything heavy. Do not lift anything more than 2-3kg for two weeks after surgery (this equals the weight of a bag of oranges).

Get plenty of rest as you may feel tired after your hospital stay. You will be able to get dressed independently and will slowly increase your level of activity each day.

Smoking is not recommended.

If you experience any difficulty breathing, problems with your vision or dizziness, go to the nearest emergency department or your local GP as soon as possible.

Contacts

**Coordinator, Head and Neck Cancer,
Multidisciplinary Clinic and Liaison Nurse**
Tel: 9288 2755

Waiting List Officer
Tel: 9288 2271

This information sheet is intended as a guideline only. If you have further questions or concerns, please speak to your doctor.