

Information for patients

Parotidectomy

What is a parotidectomy?

A parotidectomy is an operation to remove the parotid gland and any other associated tumours. The parotid gland is a major salivary gland located in each cheek, just under the level of the ear.

What happens before my operation?

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 into 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 to 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.

What happens on the day of my operation?

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 (surgical cut) on your neck starting just under the ear and extending along the bottom of your jaw line so the two lobes of the parotid gland (superficial and deep lobes) can be identified.

If you are having a superficial parotidectomy, only the superficial lobe will be removed. Both lobes will be removed during a total parotidectomy. A drain tube will most likely be inserted before the wound is closed and a dressing applied.

What will happen 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.

You may have an oxygen mask to help you breathe and an intravenous (IV) drip in your arm providing fluids until you are able to eat and drink.

You will have a dressing over your neck wound. You may also have a drain tube in your neck area to drain away any excess fluid and reduce swelling.

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.

As the parotid gland is close to some of the nerves of your face, mouth or eyelids, sometimes the operation may make these droop slightly. This is usually only temporary but can take a number of weeks to return to normal.

You will remain resting in bed for the first few hours after your operation, and then the nurses 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 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.

When can I go home?

Most people stay in hospital for three to five 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 will recommend time off work 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 should slowly increase your level of activity each day.

Smoking is not recommended.

If you experience any difficulty breathing, notice bleeding from your wound or have any other concerns, go to the nearest emergency department or your local GP as soon as possible.

Contacts

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.