

Information for patients

Partial or hemi-glossectomy

What is a partial or hemi-glossectomy?

A partial or hemi-glossectomy is an operation to remove a tumour growing on the tongue.

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 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 this procedure. 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, when you are completely asleep 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 remove the part of the tongue where the tumour is found and some surrounding healthy tissue. A laser may be used during the procedure.

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.

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

You may also have a catheter in your bladder to monitor your urine output.

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.

Most operations to the mouth and throat make eating and drinking difficult or uncomfortable for a time.

You will not be allowed to eat and drink for the first night after your operation.

The day after your operation you will be seen by the speech pathologist who will assess what type of food and drink you should have.

When can I go home?

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

As your wounds are inside your mouth, oral hygiene is very important. The nursing staff will explain how to keep your mouth clean before you leave the hospital. This is especially important after eating.

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 mouth or have any other concerns, 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.