

Post-Operative Instructions for Patients after DBS Surgery

Post-Operative pain

A mild amount of pain and swelling at the surgical sites after DBS surgery is common. You will be given a prescription for an oral pain medication upon discharge from the hospital. Pain medications may be taken every 4-6 hours if needed. Taper off this and switch to Tylenol as soon as possible. Prescription pain medication can cause sleepiness, confusion, constipation, nausea or a rash. If you develop a rash, confusion or excessive nausea, stop taking the medication. Call our office for another prescription if needed.

Battery and Extension Placement

The battery/batteries and extension(s) are usually placed during a separate surgery 1-2 weeks later. Their placement involves creating a small scalp incision(s), tunneling the extension(s) under the skin to an incision on the chest. This surgery is done under general anesthesia. Before surgery, take your medications for your movement disorder as you normally do. If blood thinners were stopped for the lead placement, do not restart them until your surgeon advises you that it is safe to resume them.

Wound Care

All wounds should be kept clean and dry for the first 2 days after surgery. On day 3, remove the dressing covering your wound and leave the wound open to air. You should start showering daily on the 3rd day after surgery. DO NOT scrub incisions, treat them very gently. You may allow soap and water to drain over the chest wound, and you should use "baby shampoo" over scalp wounds. Blot the wound dry when you are finished and leave them open to air.

Non-dissolvable sutures used on the scalp will be removed within 7-14 days after surgery. The stitches used for the battery incision are internal and dissolvable and the chest wall requires no dressings. You may have small pieces of tape covering the chest wall incision that should fall off within 7-10 days. You may remove residual chest wall tape (steri-strips) after 10 days.

Mild swelling around the incision is normal. Immediately report any expanding redness around the wound; bloody or clear, water-like drainage; separation of the wound edges; fevers above 101.5 °F; or night sweats.

Activity & Diet

Depending upon your occupation, we recommend taking at least 2 weeks off after each surgery. For patients with Parkinson's disease, we recommend taking off 6-8 weeks to allow time to adjust to new medication and programming settings.

Do not lift objects that weigh more than 20lbs for the first 4-6 weeks after surgery. No straining/exertion/strenuous activity in the first 2 weeks. The amount of activity you may perform after the first 2 weeks is largely individual and difficult to generalize. Let your comfort level and common sense be your guide. To limit infection risk, do not go to the gym for 4-6 weeks after the last surgery and avoid swimming or hot tubs for 2 months after surgery. You can increase your diet as tolerated. Dental work should be deferred for 6 weeks after the last surgery to limit infection risk.

Constipation

If you are having trouble with constipation due to pain medicine and inactivity, Senakot, Dulcolax and fleets enemas can be purchased over-the-counter at your local drug store. Consult your pharmacist.

Driving

Do not drive for two weeks following surgery. If you are still using a prescription pain reliever, you may not drive. If you were driving before surgery, you may return driving after a family member checks your driving skills.

Microlesion Effect

Sometimes there is a “honeymoon” period following electrode implantation but before the battery is activated – during this period, some of your symptoms may be much better even though the DBS has not been connected or turned on yet. This will fade away and you can expect to return back to your previous level of functioning.

Medications:

Continue to take all of your movement disorder medications the same way as you did before surgery, unless otherwise instructed.

If you are asked to stop blood thinners such as aspirin or Plavix, you may restart these after the battery placement surgery, once you have been cleared by neurosurgery.

Continue the medications prescribed by your neurologist for your movement disorder. The DBS generator is left off following surgery and will be programmed by the neurologist in the postoperative period.

Follow-up appointments

Neurosurgery will see you 7-12 days after each operation to check wound healing, remove sutures, and arrange any further post-operative care visits that might be necessary. Make a list of questions to be answered during the visit.

Your DBS will be activated by Neurology approximately 3-4 weeks after your leads are placed.

Hair Care

NO hair coloring or perm solutions can be used until 6 weeks after surgery.
NO haircuts with clippers for 6 weeks following surgery.

Flights

Wait 2 weeks from the last surgery.

PLEASE CALL OUR OFFICE IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS:

Neurology Clinic: (916)734-3588 or Neurosurgery Clinic: (916) 734-4300.