

Craniosynostosis Surgery Post-Operative Instructions

What is Craniosynostosis surgery?

The goal of craniosynostosis surgery is to open the prematurely fused suture, restore the normal shape of head, and allow for normal brain growth. The surgeons access the bone of the skull through a wavy incision that goes from ear to ear across the top of the head. The Neurosurgeon removes the skull and dissects the bone from the brain. The Plastic Surgeon makes cuts in the bones of the skull to reshape the head. The bones are sometimes held in place with absorbable plates or sutures.

What changes to appearance can I expect after the surgery?

After craniosynostosis surgery, there will be sutures (stitches) across the top of your child's head from ear to ear. There will also be a shaven strip of hair. Your child's face will be very swollen, and their eyelids may be swollen shut. Their forehead will appear very prominent. This will decrease in severity overtime.

How will I take care of the wounds?

Keep the suture line clean. Wash your child's head as you normally would with baby shampoo and warm water. You will receive a prescription for a special antibiotic ointment to keep on the suture line for the first week. After that you may put Vaseline on the incision. While at home your child will need to sleep with the head of the bed slightly elevated to help continue to decrease the swelling in their head. Sometimes sleeping in a car seat or bounce seat is easier. It is not necessary to wear a helmet after surgery. It takes approximately 12 weeks for the bones in your child's head to heal and regain full strength.

How will I manage my child's pain at home?

Your child's pain will be well controlled by the time they are discharged from the hospital. Often, Tylenol® is adequate for managing pain relief a few days after surgery. You may receive a prescription for a pain reliever upon discharge from the hospital.

What will my child be able to eat?

Your child will be tolerating a regular diet soon after surgery. It is often several days or a week before their appetite returns.

What kind of activity can my child do after surgery?

When you are discharged home, close supervision at all times is necessary. Your child may not resume any rough activity. If your child walks, it is very important to pad surfaces that he or she may be in danger of bumping their head on. If your child does not walk yet, they need to be kept in an environment where another toddler will not bump or accidentally hurt them.

When will my child return for a follow-up appointment?

An appointment will be made for you to return to the Plastic Surgery Clinic about 2 weeks after discharge. Please make a list of any questions you may have. If you are unable to keep your appointment, it is very important for you to call and reschedule. You may also have follow up appointments again 2-3 months after discharge and then yearly for several years.

When should I call the doctor?

Call us if your child has any of the following signs or symptoms:

- Signs of increasing swelling
- Redness or drainage from the incision
- Any sutures coming out or the incision appears to be spreading apart

- Oral temperature over 101°F
- If you have any questions

What is the contact information?

If you have any question, problems or concerns call the Pediatric Plastic Surgery clinic from 8-5:00pm Monday thru Friday, 734-763-8063. After 5:00pm or on the weekends if you have urgent issues call hospital paging at 734 936-4000 and ask the operator to page the Plastic Surgery Resident “on call”.

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