

Lymph Node Dissection Post-Operative Instructions

Your surgeon has recommended a lymph node dissection because your sentinel node(s) were positive for cancer.

The number of lymph nodes removed depends on the individual person and where the tumor is located on the body, such as the groin, armpit, or neck. In this surgery, an area of tissue containing lymph nodes, called a fat pad, is removed, the lymph nodes are not removed individually. When the pathologist reviews the tissue the lymph nodes will be counted and reviewed individually to look for cancer cells. Some patients have no more cancer cells than the positive sentinel node.

What are my post-operative instructions?

- Remaining tissues tend to leak some lymph fluid when the lymph nodes are removed, a drain is left in place, for the first 2-3 weeks after the operation, or until the area heals. Please refer to additional **JP Drain Post-Operative Instructions**.
- The JP Drain can be removed when the total drainage is less than 30 ccs each day for 2 days in a row.
- You may remove the gauze dressing held by tape 48 hours after the procedure.
- You may not shower until your drains are out for 48 hours.
- Keep the incision clean and dry. Avoid use of lotions, antibiotics ointment, creams, powders, or healing gels on the incision area. It is best to allow it to heal on its own. Please refer to additional **Suture Care Post-Operative Instructions**.
- Surgical areas are held together with staples and are generally removed 14-21 days post-operatively.

- If steri strips are used, leave them in place until they are removed or fall off on their own.. If your incision was closed with skin glue, it will slowly flake off over the first couple of weeks
- You can anticipate mild numbness to the surgical area. Temporary limitations in movement of the involved limb after surgery.

Special Instructions for Inguinal Lymph Node Dissection Surgery

Your leg will be more prone to swelling. It is common to experience some swelling in the first few days after surgery. To reduce swelling, you should elevate your leg above the level of your heart throughout the day as well as at night until your postoperative clinic appointment. You should avoid placing your leg in a downward (dependent) position for any extended amount of time. It is important to wear compression to the affected extremity to reduce swelling.

Who should I call if I have questions?

- **Clinic Phone (734) 998-6022**
For questions and prescription refills please contact our clinic at during office hours (Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)
- **Hospital Paging (734) 936-6267**
After hours and on weekends, call and ask for the Plastic Surgeon on call.

How do I manage my pain?

Pre-operative Instructions:

- Prior to your surgery, pain medication will be prescribed by your Primary care physician or referring physician.
- If you **do not** have an established Primary care physician, please call the Physician referral service at **1-800-211-8181**.
- To establish yourself with a primary care physician **prior** to your surgery, please schedule an appointment with the new primary care physician.

Post-operative Instructions:

- After having surgery, it is expected you will experience some pain even with pain medication. This is a normal part of recovery.
- You will be provided a prescription for pain medicine that will last until your first return post-op visit.
- At your first post-op visit, your pain will be evaluated. The surgical team will manage your pain for the acute recovery phase.
- Acute pain management for major surgery is typically 6 to 12 weeks.
- Acute pain management for minor procedures is typically 7-10 days.
- You may not drive while you are taking narcotic pain medication or otherwise instructed by your surgical team.

Managing Prescription Refills:

- Please call the clinic at **734-998-6022** for medication refills.
- You may also contact us using the Patient Portal at <https://www.myuofmhealth.org>.
- Messages received after hours or on the weekend will be processed the next business day.
- Please allow 24 hours or one business day to have your request reviewed by your surgical team.

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