

Care Instructions After Craniosynostosis Surgery

What can I expect after my child's craniosynostosis surgery?

- After craniosynostosis surgery, there will be **sutures** (stitches) across the top of your child's head from ear to ear. The area around the sutures will be pink and slightly swollen. These stitches will dissolve over time and will not need to be removed.
- Behind the ear on each of side of the head, there will be a small opening in the **incision** (cut made during surgery) to let fluid drain out. This will close on its own in a few days after surgery.
- Your child's face will be very swollen, and their eyelids may be swollen shut. The swelling should improve over the first 1-2 weeks.
- Your child's forehead may also look very big after surgery. This will decrease over time.
- To help reduce swelling, please try to keep your child's head elevated (raised) when they're sleeping or lying down. Sometimes sleeping in a car seat or bounce seat is easier.
- Your child will not need to wear a helmet after surgery.

How will my child eat and drink after surgery?

- Your child's feedings may be smaller than the normal amount. You may have to do small feedings more often than usual for the first week after surgery. Check their wet diapers and encourage your child to drink liquids to make sure that they are still peeing and not becoming dehydrated.
- Your child will not have any dietary restrictions (meaning they can eat or drink whatever they'd like).

What pain medications will my child be taking?

- We will prescribe acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and ibuprofen (Motrin®) to help manage your child's pain after surgery. You should give them these medications around-the-clock (except for when they are sleeping) for about 3-5 days after surgery. **Around-the-clock** means that they take them throughout the day on a set schedule. Give them these medications together every 6 hours (for example, you can give your child doses of both Tylenol® and Motrin® at 9:00 AM, 3:00 PM, and 9:00 PM).
- We will also prescribe oxycodone for pain control. You should only use this if their pain is not being controlled by the acetaminophen and ibuprofen.
- Pain medication doses for children are based on their weight, so we will tell you how much acetaminophen, ibuprofen, and oxycodone to give them in their discharge instructions.
- Showing your child tender loving care can help them deal with their pain. Cuddle and talk to your child often.

How can I keep the incision site clean?

- You should clean the incision site (where the stitches are) every day. Wash your child's hair as you normally would with baby shampoo.
- We may give you an antibiotic ointment to put on the incision for the first week after surgery. After the first week, put petroleum jelly or Vaseline® on the incision site to prevent hard scabs from forming and to keep the area well-hydrated. You can apply this as many times as needed throughout the day to prevent scabbing and dryness. You will continue to do this as needed for about 4 weeks after surgery.

What activities should my child avoid after surgery?

- Your child should avoid any rough activity, like wrestling while playing around with other children.
- If your child is able to walk, try to pad any surfaces that they might bump their head on.

When should I call the Pediatric Plastic Surgery clinic?

Before you call the clinic:

- Make sure your child is getting enough liquids. Dehydration can cause their body temperature to rise.
- Check: Is your child getting a cold? Is anyone else at home sick? Their symptoms might be caused by the cold, and not by their craniosynostosis surgery.
- If your child will not eat, try to show them tender loving care. Give them lots of snuggles and try to keep calm. If they still will not eat, please give us a call.

Call the clinic:

- If you notice symptoms of infection, such as:
 - Bright redness around the incision site
 - Thick, pus-like drainage (leaking fluid) from the incision site
 - Fever (a temperature greater than 100.8° F)
- If the incision site looks like it is spreading apart or getting wider

What is the contact information for the Pediatric Plastic Surgery clinic?

- Between 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM Monday through Friday, call (734) 998-6022 or send us a message through the online patient portal (MyUofMHealth.org).

- For urgent issues after 4:30 PM or on weekends, call the hospital at (734) 936-4000. Ask the operator to page the on-call pediatric plastic surgeon.

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