

# Neck Dissection Discharge Instructions

A neck dissection may be performed alone to further evaluate a neck mass, to biopsy lymph nodes, or in addition to another procedure being performed on the head and neck.

## Incision Care:

- If sutures or staples are still in place, clean incision twice a day with hydrogen peroxide followed by saline solution.
- If no drainage is present, clean with saline solution only.
- Apply a thin film of prescribed ointment.
- After the sutures/staples are removed, wash the area gently with mild soap with your daily bath/shower
- Pat dry

## Numbness:

- Your neck and shoulder may be numb for an extended period of time.
- Take precautions to avoid injury to your skin.
  - Do not use a hot water bottle or heating pad to this area.
  - Protect yourself from sunburn and extreme cold using protective covering and sunscreen (SPF 15 or greater).
  - Use an electric razor to avoid cutting your skin.

## Swelling:

- Some swelling of your face, especially around your eyes and jawline may persist until your body adjusts to the removal of lymph nodes and blood vessels (if applicable).
- The swelling may be greater in the morning.
- You may also have a headache.
- Sleep with your head elevated on 2-3 pillows to reduce swelling and promote comfort.

## Activity Level:

- You are encouraged to gradually increase your activity level at home.
- You should walk frequently and move your affected arm and shoulder to perform activities of daily living.
- It is very important to move your arm/shoulder even though it may be uncomfortable for you.

## Stiffness:

- Shoulder and neck stiffness and discomfort may occur.
- The ability to move your affected arm and shoulder will be evaluated when you return for your first postoperative clinic appointment.

## Contact your physician if any of these occur:

- Separation of incision
- Increased redness or drainage of the suture line
- Increased facial or neck swelling
- Pain not relieved by pain medication
- Fever greater than 101°

If you have any questions, please call the ENT clinic at the number listed at the bottom of the page

