

## Craniotomy/Brain Surgery

What has happened?

You have undergone an operation to your skull to allow access to your brain or its blood vessels. Please remember pain is completely normal following an operation as your body is recuperating. Headaches can be common after cranial surgery.

Some of the reasons for this type of surgery include:

- Removal of a lump or tumour
- Removal of a blood clot
- To relieve swelling of the brain (cerebral oedema)

What to do now?

- You will be monitored after your operation in the Intensive Care Unit – usually for 24 hours.
- You should try to mobilise as early as you are comfortable – this will usually be with nursing staff or physio supervision to begin with.
- You can expect to be in hospital anywhere between 2-5 days, depending on the type of surgery you have had.

Post-operative medications:

- Headaches and surgical site pain can be managed with simple analgesia such as Paracetamol (Panadol)
- You will likely be prescribed a steroid medication – such as Dexamethasone to control swelling in the brain
- Another common postoperative medication is an anticonvulsant medication – such as Levetiracetam (Keppra) to prevent seizures.
- You will be guided by your surgeon/neurologist on how to manage these medications

**It is extremely important not to stop these medications suddenly or without the guidance from your surgeon/neurologist - these medications can be harmful if stopped suddenly.**

Managing at home:

- You are able to return to normal household duties as you feel able, however consider pacing principles and rest when needed.
- You are likely to feel some tiredness after your surgery, this is normal and part of healing.
- Increase your level of activity slowly, walking is a great start.
- You can resume sexual activity as soon as comfortable

Driving:

- Await clearance from your doctor before you resume driving
- Guidelines for driving on a personal licence is 6 months post-surgery
- Guidelines for driving on a commercial licence is 12 months post-surgery

Wound Care:

- Keep your wound clean and dry
- You can wash your hair, try to avoid picking, knocking or rubbing your wound.
- Pat the area dry with a clean dry towel.

- Avoid lotions, creams or ointments for at least 2 weeks
- Avoid hairdryers or direct sources of heat for at least 2 weeks
- Avoid hair dyes for at least 12 weeks.
- Monitor for redness, swelling, heat or pain at the surgical site as these may be signs of infection – call the practice or contact your GP if you notice any of these symptoms
- You will be seen by our practice nurse for a wound review 1-2 weeks after your surgery.

Getting back to normal:

- Be guided by your treating team as to returning to work.
- Expect to have good and bad days, this is normal.
- Rest when you need to rest
- Continue to increase your level of activity in increments.
- Await clearance before you resume driving.
- It may be beneficial to work with a physiotherapist, occupational therapist or speech therapist during the initial stages of recovery.