



## **Modified Radical Neck Dissection**

### **What is a modified radical neck dissection?**

A modified radical neck dissection removes lymph nodes from an area of the neck positive for cancer. The lymph nodes are removed to help prevent the spread of cancer and treat the current cancer. This surgery is scheduled on an in-patient basis, meaning that you will be spending the night at the hospital.

### **Surgery preparation**

Shower and shampoo the night before surgery. Pay special attention to scrubbing the face, neck, and chest to decrease bacterial count. Shower again the morning of surgery. Brush your teeth the morning of surgery. Shave as per your usual routine, if necessary, the morning of surgery. Males will want to purchase an electric razor for post-op use due to decreased sensation and swelling on the face and neck.

### **Post-op hospitalization routine**

- It is possible that you will have a tracheostomy. This is temporary and will be closed at a later date.
- You will have had a tube (Foley catheter) placed in your bladder for urinary drainage while you were asleep on the operating room table.
- You will receive IV fluids for a few days after the surgery for medications and fluid support.
- You will have 1-3 JP drains or hemovac in your chest/neck area to decrease swelling around your surgical site. The drains may be placed in your pocket or secured with tape and safety pins to your clothing when you are up and out of bed. These drains will be removed one by one within the first few days.

### **Diet Progression**

If your swallowing mechanism is intact, you will gradually be allowed to try swallowing clear liquids once the physician orders oral fluids. The diet will then progress to full liquids and followed by soft foods.

### **Pain Control**

The first few days post-op you may receive IV pain relief medications. You will need to indicate to the nursing staff if you need pain relief so that a dose or increased dose may be given. If you are hurting, use your pain medications. Do not worry about becoming "addicted". If you have pain, you need the pain relief medicine. You may find the use of pain medication to be beneficial the first days before getting out of bed.

### **Activity**

You will need approximately six hours to recover from the effects of anesthesia immediately post-op. The head of the bed will be raised and your neck must remain flexed to avoid strain on your incision lines. When instructed to do so you may begin gentle strengthening and gentle range of motion exercises.

### **Wound Care**

You may expect some significant swelling post-op at your surgical site. The nursing staff will assist you initially in cleaning crusts and old blood on your surgical incisions several times a day with cotton tipped applicators. Use these applicators to apply Bacitracin to your incision as instructed. Adhesive steri-strips may be applied to the incision. These will gradually fall off. The edges of the strips may be trimmed as they fray up off the skin. Staples and sutures are usually removed 10-14 days post-op. Call the office if drainage begins to seep from your incision or if unusual swelling or extended redness begins. Once your incision has healed, use sunscreen on the incisions if you go outside to minimize scarring. Avoid sun exposure to your incisions.