

## **DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS AFTER CRANITOMY**

\*Although post-operative recovery is somewhat different for everyone, here are some helpful guidelines for the first two weeks after your surgery.

**ACTIVITY:** Get plenty of rest. For the first week after surgery, avoid heavy lifting (over 5 lbs), bending over and excessive straining. For the first two weeks after surgery, you should not drive or exercise, however, walking is encouraged. After two weeks, you can begin to resume all normal activities including driving and exercise.

**BATHING:** You may shower or bathe but keep your scalp or eyebrow incision clean and dry for the first 4 days after surgery. (If you have skin staples, they will be removed 7 to 10 days after your surgery). If you have an abdominal incision from a fat graft, avoid getting it wet for the first 4 days after surgery by covering it with plastic wrap. After the 4<sup>th</sup> post-operative day your scalp and abdominal incisions needs no dressing.

**DRIVING:** You may resume driving two weeks after surgery provided your vision is not impaired since surgery and you do not have double vision.

**DIET:** You may resume the type of diet you had before surgery.

**WORK:** You should have clearance from your doctor before going back to work. At least 2-3 weeks off after surgery is recommended before resuming work although working at a desk on a computer is often possible after 10 days to 2 weeks.

### **WARNING SIGNS:**

- Redness or drainage from the incision site.
- Clear watery drainage from the incision *may be cerebrospinal fluid (CSF)*.
- Persistent headache not relieved by medication and rest. (It is normal to have some mild to moderate headaches for up to 2 weeks after surgery)
- Excessive fatigue or tiredness (most patients experience some fatigue and tiredness).
- Persistent chills; onset of fever (over 100°).
- Onset of stiff neck, nausea/vomiting or diarrhea.
- New or increased visual problems. (Blurring, loss of peripheral vision, double vision)
- Onset of excessive urination or thirst.
- **If any of the above symptoms occur contact Dr. Kelly's office at 310-582-7450. On weekends, the answering service will forward the call to Dr. Kelly or one of his colleagues. If the problem is urgent, you may need to go to the Saint John's Emergency room or your local emergency room.**

**B R A I N T U M O R C E N T E R**  
AT SAINT JOHN'S HEALTH CENTER

**MEDICATIONS:** You may be given prescriptions for new medications you are to take at home and possibly for medications you have already had prescribed. You may fill these at any pharmacy. Before discharge, your nurse will review your medication dosage, schedule, and side effects. **It is important to take your medications as ordered.**

**Possible discharge medications include:**

- Dexamethasone, prednisone or hydrocortisone: These steroids are normally produced by the adrenal glands and are necessary for dealing with stress and to help reduce brain swelling. Dr. Kelly and your other doctors will decide how long you need this medication – possibly weeks or longer.
- DDAVP (Desmopressin acetate - hormone for salt and water balance). The pituitary gland may not produce enough of this hormone after surgery. This usually resolves within 3-4 days after surgery. Overdosing of this medication may lead to low blood sodium levels causing listlessness, headache, confusion and decreased urine output.
- Sodium Chloride (salt tablets): You may be losing more salt than normal for 5-10 days after surgery and require added salt. Side effects may be upset stomach and nausea.
- Anti-seizure medications: (Dilantin, Keppra, Phenobarbital, Tegretal): You may take these for only one week after surgery or if you have had a seizure in the past or are at ongoing risk of seizures, you may need to remain on these medications indefinitely.

**Appointments after hospital discharge:**

**Post-operative sodium blood level check:** This test should be done on the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> day after surgery. It can be done at Saint John's or an outside medical lab closer to your home. Results should be faxed to Dr. Kelly at **310-582-7495**

**Follow-up with Dr. Kelly:** 2-3 weeks after surgery. Please call **310-582-7450** to schedule an appointment. Bring your sodium test results with you to this appointment.

**For additional post-surgical information and information about the Patient Support Group visit [www.brain-tumor.org](http://www.brain-tumor.org) or contact our office at 310-582-7450.**

**Thank you.**