

Understanding Parotidectomy

- **What it is:** A parotidectomy is a surgical procedure to remove part or all of your parotid gland. The parotid glands, located on each side of your face in front of the ears, are the largest of the salivary glands.
- **Reasons for the Procedure:** Your doctor may recommend a parotidectomy if you have:
 - **Parotid Tumour:** A growth in the parotid gland, which may be benign (non-cancerous) or malignant (cancerous).
 - **Chronic Infection:** Persistent infection in the parotid gland that does not respond to other treatments.
 - **Sialolithiasis (Salivary Gland Stones):** Stones blocking the parotid duct, causing pain and swelling.
 - **Other Conditions:** In rare cases, a parotidectomy may be necessary for other reasons.

Potential Benefits of Parotidectomy

- **Addressing Parotid Issues:** Removes growths (benign or cancerous), resolves stubborn infections, removes stones, and can address other rare conditions affecting the parotid gland.
- **Relief of Symptoms:** Eliminates pain, swelling, and discomfort associated with parotid problems.

Important Considerations

- **Risks of Surgery:** Like any surgery, a parotidectomy has potential risks. It's crucial to discuss these thoroughly with your surgeon. These include:
 - **General Risks:**
 - Bleeding (less than 5%)
 - Infection (less than 10%)
 - **Specific Risks:**
 - **Facial Nerve Weakness:** The facial nerve runs through the parotid gland. There's a risk of temporary or, in rare cases (less than 2%), permanent weakness of facial muscles controlled by this nerve.
 - **Numbness:** You may experience numbness in the ear, cheek, or neck area after surgery, which is often temporary.

- **Frey's Syndrome:** A rare complication where sweating and flushing can occur on the side of the surgery when eating.
- **Dry Mouth:** In some cases, saliva production may be decreased, depending on the extent of the surgery.
- **Alternatives:** Depending on your specific situation, less invasive approaches like close monitoring, medications, or less extensive procedures might be options. Discuss the pros and cons of all approaches with your doctor.

Preparing for the Parotidectomy

- **Pre-Surgery Consultation:** You'll have a detailed discussion with your surgeon about the procedure, risks, benefits, alternative options, and your specific medical history.
- **Medications:** Your doctor will advise on any adjustments to your regular medications before surgery.
- **Fasting:** You'll be asked to fast (no food or certain drinks) for a specific time before surgery.
- **Questions:** Prepare a list of questions you have – no concern is too small!

What to Expect on the Day of Surgery

- **Arrival at the Hospital:** When you arrive, you'll be asked to check in and provide any necessary information.
- **Preparation:** A nurse will review your medical history, take your vital signs, and may start an IV (intravenous line) for fluids and medication.
- **Meeting Your Team:** You'll likely meet your surgeon, anaesthetist, and other healthcare professionals involved in your care.

The Surgery

- **Operating Room:** You'll be taken to the operating room and prepared for surgery.
- **Anaesthesia:** The anaesthetist will administer general anaesthesia, so you'll be asleep during the procedure.
- **The Parotidectomy Procedure:** * Incision * Careful identification and protection of the facial nerve * Removal of part or all of the parotid gland * Meticulous checking for any evidence of bleeding * Closing the incision

Recovery After Surgery

- **Post-Surgery Ward:** You'll wake up in a recovery area where nurses will monitor your condition.

- **Pain and Discomfort:** You may experience some pain, swelling, and discomfort in the surgical area. Pain medication will be available.
- **Eating and Drinking:** You'll likely be able to drink and eat soft foods soon after surgery.
- **Discharge from the Hospital:** Many patients go home the same day or stay overnight. Detailed instructions for wound care, medications, activity restrictions, and follow-up appointments will be provided.

Where to Find Further Information

- **Your Surgeon:** Your primary source for reliable information.
- **Relevant Charities/Support Groups:** Your surgeon may suggest these for additional information and support.

Who to Contact with Questions

- **Surgeon:** Your primary contact for any questions.
- **GP (General Practitioner):** Can help with initial questions and referrals.

Introduction

This leaflet provides guidance for your recovery after a parotidectomy. This surgery is done to remove a portion or all of the parotid gland, a salivary gland located near your ear. Your body needs time to heal, and everyone recovers at a different pace. This information will help you understand the recovery process, including diet, medication, wound care, exercises, and returning to your usual routine.

Diet and Swallowing

You may find chewing and swallowing difficult for a few days after surgery. Start with liquids and gradually progress to soft foods. Avoid hard, crunchy, or spicy foods until your mouth and throat feel comfortable.

A healthy, balanced diet is important for optimal healing.

Constipation is common after surgery. Increase your intake of high-fiber foods and drink plenty of fluids. If constipation persists, ask your pharmacist or doctor for a gentle laxative.

Medication

- **Pain Relief:** You will likely be prescribed pain medication. Take it as directed.
- **Antibiotics:** You may be prescribed antibiotics to prevent infection. Take them as directed, even if you feel better.
- **Other Medications:** Your doctor may prescribe other medications based on your specific condition and surgical findings.

When to Go to A&E (Accident & Emergency)

Seek immediate medical attention if you experience any of the following:

- Severe facial swelling or difficulty breathing
- Fever (temperature of 38°C or higher)
- Signs of infection around your wound: Increased pain, redness, swelling, or foul-smelling discharge
- Sudden, severe facial weakness on the side of the surgery

Caring for Your Wound and Scar

Your wound may be closed with stitches, staples, or special skin glue. Follow your surgeon's specific instructions for wound care. This may include:

- **If you have skin glue:** You can shower with soap the day after surgery. Gently pat the area dry. The glue will dissolve and come away over about two weeks. Avoid baths, swimming, or submerging your wound underwater until your surgeon says it's safe.
- **If you have stitches or staples:** Keep the area clean and dry as instructed by your surgeon. They will be removed during a follow-up appointment.

Facial Exercises

Your surgeon or a physical therapist may recommend facial exercises to promote healing and nerve function.

- Start these as instructed, usually a few days after surgery.
- Perform them gently and as directed.

Activity

- **Rest:** Get plenty of rest in the first few weeks.
- **Light Activity:** Start with short walks and gradually increase activity as you feel stronger.
- **Lifting Restrictions:** Avoid heavy lifting (generally over 10lbs) for the first few weeks, as directed by your surgeon.
- **Driving:** Do not drive until you have good head and neck mobility and are not taking strong pain medications.

Returning to Your Routine

- **Going Back to Work:** The timeline for returning to work varies. Discuss this with your surgeon.
- **Temporary Facial Nerve Issues:** Some people experience temporary facial nerve weakness or numbness. This usually improves over weeks to months. Talk to your doctor if you have concerns.
- **Follow-up Care:** Be sure to attend all your follow-up appointments.

We're Here For You! Your healthcare team is dedicated to supporting you throughout your recovery.