



Dr. *Francis* T. Hall

EAR, NOSE, THROAT, HEAD & NECK

Branchial cyst excision care

When we are developing inside our mothers, (in utero), some developing tissue may be caught in the wrong place and a branchial cyst may be formed. Branchial cysts frequently become infected and swollen. It is recommended that a branchial cyst is removed. This care sheet gives you a general idea about how long it will take for you to recover, but each person recovers at a different pace. Follow the steps below to feel better as quickly as possible.

What to expect:

- You will be in hospital for one night and have a plastic drain in your neck. A drain is a small plastic tube connected to a plastic bottle. It drains tissue fluid and any blood out from under the skin of your neck.
- The drain will be removed by the nurse 1-2 days following your operation. Some patients go home with a drain in the neck and come back to have it removed.
- You may have a sore throat after surgery. The tube the anaesthetist puts down your throat to help you breathe during surgery often irritates the throat and sometimes causes a hoarse voice after surgery. Thankfully the sore throat usually resolves quickly in 2-3 days. You should drink plenty of fluids, and it may be helpful to take throat lozenges to relieve your symptoms.
- Some people have a stiff sore neck after surgery. This is due to the position that you were in during surgery and the site of the surgery. Please stretch the neck by looking up at the ceiling and rotating your head from side to side several times each day. This helps stretch the muscles and return things back to normal.
- Some people feel a tightness in their neck at the site of the operation. This will improve over a few weeks and the same stretching exercises mentioned above help this too.
- It is common for the skin above or below the incision to be numb after the operation. This usually improves a lot over the subsequent 2-6 months.
- It is usual to feel tired after surgery. Some of this tiredness is due to the operation and some is due to the general anaesthetic. Rest up, get some light daily exercise and the tiredness will quickly resolve.

Activity:

- Do not drive in the 24 hours following your surgery.
- Dr Hall recommends taking 1-2 weeks off work following excision of a branchial cyst.
- Rest when you feel tired. Getting enough sleep will help you recover.
- Try to walk each day. Start by walking a little more than you did the day before. Bit by bit, increase the amount you walk.
- In order to reduce the chance of bleeding, avoid strenuous activities, such as bicycle riding, jogging, weight-lifting, or aerobic exercise, for 2 to 3 weeks.
- Refrain from heavy lifting (greater than 7kg) in the first 2 weeks following surgery.

Diet:

- Resume your regular diet, there are no dietary restrictions.

Shower/ bathing:

- Please keep the incision dry and shower from the neck down until three days after the drain was removed. You may shower or bath as usual three days after the drain is removed.

Pain medicines:

- The pain is usually mild to moderate. Severe pain is not expected.
- Take pain medicines exactly as directed (Dr Hall will prescribe).
- If you think your pain medicine is making you sick to your stomach:
 - Take your pain medicine after meals (unless Dr Hall has told you not to).
 - Ask Dr Hall for a different pain medicine.

Incision care:

- Your wound is covered with Steristrips. Steristrips are thin adhesive strips which are placed over your incision to help it heal. Leave the Steristrips in place until they fall off on their own. They often fall off the skin within 10 to 14 days. Remember to pat the incision site dry and not to rub a towel across the incision site as this will loosen the Steristrips and they may fall off too early.
- Please keep the incision dry and shower from the neck down until three days after the last drain is removed. You may shower or bath as usual three days after the last drain is removed.
- Your stitches are below the skin (subcuticular) and are dissolvable.
- Keep sun off your wound for 6 months. This avoids the wound going a dark colour (post inflammatory hyperpigmentation). There are three ways to keep the sun off the wound: wear clothing that covers the area, use sunblock or simply cover the wound with tape. Dr Hall recommends ½ inch light brown micropore tape (a 3M product). You can buy this product from most pharmacies.

Problems:

- The branchial cyst lies immediately beside the accessory nerve. The accessory nerve supplies the trapezius muscle which rotates the shoulder blade (scapula). Sometimes the accessory nerve stops working for a while following surgery and you may have trouble lifting your arm out the side for a month or two. Physiotherapy will help. This nerve could also be cut during the operation, but this is very uncommon.
- The nerve to your lower lip (marginal mandibular branch of the facial nerve) dips down into your neck. Sometimes the lower lip can be a little weak following surgery. This is uncommon and usually resolves within 1-2 months.
- There are nerves in your neck to your vocal cords, swallowing muscles, and tongue. Any of these nerves may be accidentally injured during your surgery. If this happens you will have trouble speaking clearly or swallowing. This is very uncommon. Speech language therapy can help.
- Sometimes bleeding can occur under the skin at the site of the operation. If this happens it is usually in the first 24 hours after surgery and usually you would need to go back to the operating theatre so the blood can be drained, and the bleeding controlled.

When do I get my results?

- Usually, the pathologist sends a typed signed report to Dr Hall about one to two weeks after the surgery. Occasionally it may take the pathologist longer to issue a report either because of the complexity of your case or because of a higher than usual workload. Dr Hall will contact you by phone or text once he receives the pathologist's report in his inbox.

Follow up appointment:

- Dr Hall usually sees his branchial cyst patients about 2 weeks after surgery. His PA will arrange your follow up appointment for you. If you have not heard from Rebecca within one week of your surgery, please contact her on 09 281 2963.

Things to look out for:

- If there is sudden swelling of your neck call Dr Francis Hall immediately on 021 733 677.
- If your incision is getting more sore or more red over a few days call Dr Hall.

Any problems call or text Dr Francis Hall on 021 733 677

Dr.  T. Hall