



Dr. *Francis* T. Hall

EAR, NOSE, THROAT, HEAD & NECK

Parotidectomy care

The parotid gland makes saliva and lies in front of and below the ear. Parotidectomy is the name of the operation when part or all of the parotid gland is removed. Parotidectomy is performed to treat tumours of the parotid gland or recurrent infections of the parotid gland. 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.

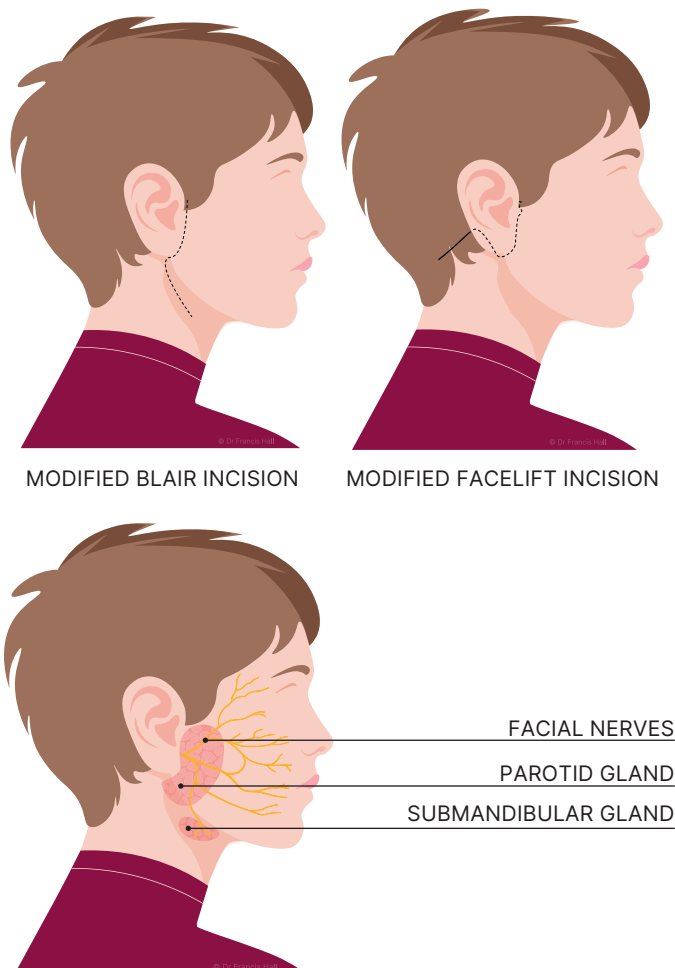
How can you care for yourself at home?

What to expect:

- Depending on the size and position of the parotid tumour, Dr Hall does parotid surgery either through a face lift incision or through an incision that starts in front of the ear and curves around onto the top part of the neck. He will discuss with you the pros and cons of each incision and together Dr Hall and you will decide on which option is better for your situation.
- You will go home either the same day or stay one night in hospital.
- You will go home with a drain (plastic tube) in your neck and return a few days later to have the drain removed.
- You will have some numbness of your ear and the skin in front of your ear.
- You may have some weakness of the muscles on the face on the side of the operation. Dr Hall will discuss this with you prior to your operation.
- 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 parotidectomy.
- Rest when you feel tired. Getting enough sleep will help you recover.
- 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 1-2 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 for the first two days after surgery. You may shower or bath as usual two days after the drain is removed.

Pain medicines:

- 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 Steri Strips. Steri Strips are thin adhesive strips which are placed over your incision to help it heal. You should avoid scrubbing or rubbing the incision site. Leave the Steri Strips in place until they fall off on their own. They will usually fall off the skin within 10 to 14 days. Try to keep them dry as much as possible to prevent infection.
- Your stitches are below the skin (subcuticular) and are dissolvable.
- Keep your incision dry until two days after your drain is removed. Two days after the drain is removed you can get the incision wet. Remember to pat the incision dry after you shower and not to rub the incision.
- Keep sun off your wound for 6 months. This helps to prevent 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.

If the parotid gland is removed, will I make enough saliva?

- After parotidectomy, you will still make enough saliva. There are six big salivary glands and multiple little salivary glands. Losing one salivary gland makes no difference to the amount of saliva you make. The other salivary glands simply make a little more saliva. The only exception to this is if your mouth is always dry before the operation, losing one salivary gland will likely make things worse. However, for most people losing one salivary gland makes no difference at all.

Problems:

- Salivary collection. Occasionally saliva can leak from the wound for a few days or weeks following parotidectomy. A Botox injection into the remaining parotid gland normally fixes this problem.
- Facial weakness can occur after parotidectomy. It is usually mild and may just affect a small part of the face. It can be severe and affect the entire half of the face, but this is uncommon. Usually if there is weakness of the face it resolves on its own. A mild weakness usually resolves in one month while a severe weakness may take 6 months or longer to resolve.
- Sometimes during surgery one or more branches of the facial nerve are passing right into the tumour. This is sometimes seen with cancer. In this situation Dr Hall will intentionally cut the branches of the facial nerve that are passing into the cancer to remove all the cancer. Failure to do so, results in the cancer recurring. Patients requiring excision of one or more branches of the facial nerve often undergo additional procedures either at the time or subsequently to improve the function and appearance of the face.
- Occasionally some patients have very unpleasant pain following parotid surgery for several months. This type of pain is due to nerve pain. It is not common and can be quite upsetting. It usually resolves completely with time. Amitriptyline or gabapentin can help.

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 parotidectomy patients 1-2 weeks after surgery. His secretary Rebecca 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 the area by your ear becomes more swollen call Dr Francis Hall 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

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