

Instructions for After Cranial Vault Remolding Neurosurgery and Plastic Surgery

Feeding

- For the first few days your child may be on fluids through intravenous directly into their veins. Immediately after anesthesia we do not encourage children to eat, but once a few hours have passed children may begin to take liquids by mouth.
- Your child may require additional blood products in the 24 hours after surgery.
- It may take a day or two for your child to return to their normal eating habits. Within the first 48 hours their eyes typically swell and this can be disorienting for your baby and will require extra effort on your part to encourage feeding.
- In order to be discharged home, your child must be drinking well. They do not have to be eating their usual amounts, but they must be drinking adequately.
- At home keep track of your child's oral intake and wet diapers. If you notice a significant decrease in either one your child may be dehydrated. If you are concerned about this call your pediatrician or surgeon. Occasionally children need to be readmitted for hydration.

Swelling

- Your child's head and face will become very swollen after surgery. The swelling gets worse for 2-3 days before it slowly starts to get better in 3-4 days when the eyes will start to open.
- Once their eyes open they are more likely to return to their normal routines, but their sleep cycle may be off for several weeks.
- Your child's eyes must be open before leaving the hospital.
- You may notice that your child is more swollen in the morning or after lying down then later in the day.
- If your child's eye become swollen shut again after you leave the hospital, call your surgeon's office.

Fevers and Infection

- Almost all children have an elevated temperature or fever in the days after surgery. This is a result of a big operation, with the body trying to heal, not usually a reflection of infection.
- Infections after surgery are uncommon.
- When infections do develop, it is usually 10-14 days after surgery
 - Signs of infection include
 - The eyes swelling shut a second time, after discharge from the hospital
 - Worsening swelling and redness around the incision
 - Milky or foul smelling drainage from the incision
 - Fevers that occur after 7-10 day post-surgery

Wound Care

- After the surgery, your child will have a small plastic drain called a JP drain beneath their incision. This prevents fluids from collecting under the skin. This is typically removed 1-2 days after surgery, but may be left longer if there is a bit more fluid.
- Your child's scalp incision has been repaired with absorbable/dissolving stitches. They do not need to be removed but do need to be kept clean.
- Clean the incision with a gentle shampoo and washcloth. You will do more harm by letting the scabs accumulate, a small amount of bleeding after scab removal is expected and not a worry.
- After cleaning, apply bacitracin ointment for the first week, and then you may switch to Vaseline. The goal is to keep the incision clean and moist.

Activity and Sleep

- Your child may take a few weeks to return to their usually sleep schedule.
- Ideally your child should avoid rough play (with older siblings for example) for 6 weeks, but we recognize it is hard to control children at this age.
- Follow all routine safety measures: car seats, seat belts in highchairs
- Your surgeon will tell you when your child may return to daycare or school, but typically within 4-6 weeks.

Pain Control

- We typically find that within a day or two after surgery children do not seem to have much pain
- Typically children require a narcotic for a day or two and then transition to acetaminophen (Tylenol)
- If your child is not drinking well or is irritable he or she could be uncomfortable.
- Keep track of your child's bowel habits. He or she should return to usual bowel habits. If your child does not have bowel movement every day, they may be constipated.
- Prune juice or over the counter laxatives can be helpful. Call the doctor's office if you think your child is constipated.

Emotional Recovery

- After surgery your child may be tired or irritable, particularly while their eyes are swollen shut. Healing for each child is different.
- In time our child will return to their usual activities.
- It is not uncommon for sleep patterns to be disturbed for up to 6 weeks after surgery.

Follow up

- Your child will need to follow up in 7-10 days after discharge. Call the office at 401-444-2299 to arrange this.
- If your child requires a helmet, they will be fitted prior to surgery, remember to bring with you for surgery.

When to call your doctor

- Fever over 101.5 degrees
- If your child's eye swell a second time
- If there is increasing swelling, redness or discharge from the incision
- If your are unable to control their pain
- If your child is unarousable