



CRANIAL VAULT REMODELING POST-OPERATIVE PATIENT INSTRUCTIONS

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Feeding

- For a couple of days after surgery, your child will be given fluids through an IV.
- After surgery, we do not have children eat right away. After a few hours children may begin to drink fluids.
- Your child may need a blood transfusion in the 24-48 hours after surgery.
- It may take a day or two for your child to want their usual food.
- Feeding is urged during this time. If his/her eyes are swollen it may be confusing for your baby.
- Your child must be drinking well to go home. Children do not have to be eating their usual amounts, but they must be drinking enough.
- At home, keep track of your child's eating and drinking, and wet diapers. If you notice a big decrease in either, your child may be dehydrated. If you are worried about this, call your pediatrician or your surgeon. Sometimes children need to come back to the hospital for hydration.

Swelling

- Your child's head and face will be swollen after surgery. This can get worse for two to three days. Then it slowly gets better. The eyes should open at the end of this time.
- Once their eyes are open, children are more likely to go back to their usual eating. Their sleeping may still be off for several weeks.
- At least one of your child's eyes must be open before you go home.
- You may notice that your child is more swollen in the morning than later in the day.
- If your child's eyes swell shut after you have left the hospital, please call your surgeon's office.

Pain Control

- Your doctor will order pain medicine for your child
- Usually a day or two after surgery, children do not seem to have much pain.
You may then stop the prescription pain medication and give Tylenol.
- If your child is not drinking well or is fussy, he or she could have pain.
- Keep track of your child's bowel movements. He or she should return to usual bowel habits. If your child does not have a regular bowel movement, he or she may be constipated.
- Prune juice or over the counter laxatives may be helpful. Call your child's doctor or nurse if you think your child is constipated.

Fevers and Infection

- Almost all children have a fever in the days after surgery. This is normal after a big operation. The body is healing, and usually not an infection.
- Infections after this surgery are unusual.
- If an infection happens, it is usually not right after surgery, but 10 to 14 days later.
- Signs of infection include:
 - The eyes swelling shut a second time. Swelling right after surgery is normal. Swelling two weeks after surgery would be abnormal.
 - Spreading swelling and redness around the incision
 - Milky or foul-smelling drainage from the incision
 - Fevers above 101.4. (early post-op fevers are very normal, but should resolve within about 7 days of surgery)
- If you are worried about infection, please call your surgeon's office.

Wound Care

- During surgery your child will have a small plastic drain put under the skin. This keeps fluid from filling under the skin. The drain is usually taken out a few days after surgery, before you go home. Your child's scalp incision has been repaired with dissolving stitches. These do not need to be taken out, but do need to be kept clean.
- Clean your child's incision with a damp washcloth, soap, and water. Remove scabs with your fingernail or the washcloth. It is worse to let scabs pile up than to pick them off. A small amount of bleeding after scab removal is normal.
- After cleaning, put antibiotic ointment on the suture line for the first week, then you may use plain Vaseline®. The goal is for the suture line to be clean and greasy.

Activity & Sleep

- Your child may take several weeks to go back to his or her usual routine and sleep habit.
- Your child should not rough play with an older sibling, for example, for six weeks. We understand it is hard to control children of this age.
- Follow your usual safety measures: car seats, seat belts in high chairs.
- Your surgeon will tell you when your child may return to daycare Usually not for four to six weeks.
- We understand that an occasional bump to the head may happen. Your child's head is not hurt by these minor traumatic events.

Emotional Recovery

- After surgery, your child may be tired or fussy, particularly while the eyes are swollen shut. Healing for each child is different.
- In time, your child will return to his or her usual activities.

Follow-up

- Your child will need to come for a follow-up visit 3 weeks after going home. Call your child's surgeon at 401-444-2299 to arrange this appointment.

When to Call Your Child's Dr

- Your child has a fever over 101.5°F degrees
- Your child's eyes swell closed a second time
- There is more swelling and redness
- If your child can't be awakened or aroused
- If you are worried, and would like to talk about changes in your child's activity or behavior.
- If it is after hours or on the weekend, please call 444-4000. Ask to speak with the on-call Plastic Surgery Resident

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