



Discharge Information and Instructions after initial Placement of Vagus Nerve Stimulator (VNS) or Battery Replacement

Department of Neurological Surgery
415-353-7500

Many patients share the same concerns after surgery: What can I expect? How should I care for my incision? Do I continue to take my same antiepileptic medications? The following general information is intended to answer these questions. If you do not find the answer to your questions here, please ask your nurse or doctor for additional information.

What to Expect

Mild swelling and bruising at the incision sites is common following implantation of the vagus nerve stimulator (VNS). This will gradually resolve in the next few weeks. There will also be some discomfort at the incision sites. This too will gradually decrease over the next few weeks.

If your VNS system is brand new, remember that it is not turned on yet. The stimulator is tested during surgery. However, it will be turned on and programmed at your post-operative visit at the Epilepsy Center. (If you were referred here to UCSF for VNS placement only, your local neurologist will program the stimulator.)

If you had only your VNS battery replaced and it was still functioning at the time of your surgery, your new battery will be turned on and programmed to the same settings before you leave the hospital, unless your doctor has informed you otherwise.

Care of the Incision

For new VNS systems, you will have an incision on your neck and chest. For VNS battery replacements only, you will only have a chest incision. These incisions will be covered with a plastic dressing. You should remove these dressings 5 to 7 days following your surgery. You may get your incisions wet one week after your procedure, but do not rub the incisions. Gently pat the incisions dry with a towel after showering.

You will either have absorbable sutures, that do not need to be removed, or non-absorbable sutures, which do need to be removed. Regardless of what type of suture material you have, you will be scheduled to return to the Neurosurgical Clinic for a post-operative visit and wound check approximately 2 weeks following your procedure. Your sutures will be removed at that time if you have the non-absorbable type.

Medications

Continue the same medications after surgery that you were taking before your surgery, including your anticonvulsant medications. In addition, you will be given pain medication to take for discomfort at the surgical site.

When to Call for Help

- Drainage or failure of the incision to heal.
- Fever higher than 101.5° F
- If you have any questions, problems, or concerns not addressed here.

Whom and Where to Call

For routine questions during office hours call the Neurosurgery Clinic 415-353-2241 and ask to speak with the Nurse Practitioner. After hours or on the weekends you may call 415-353-7500 and ask to speak with the physician on call.

If you have questions regarding your seizure activity or VSN programming, contact the Epilepsy Center physicians at 415-353-2437 or call your local neurologist if that provider is managing your seizures and VNS.

Follow up Appointments

Follow up appointments will be coordinated and scheduled for you with the Neurosurgery Clinic for wound check/suture removal and with the Epilepsy Center for stimulator programming. If you are unable to keep these appointments, please notify each office directly.

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