Discharge advice following a craniotomy

This leaflet is for general advice following your discharge.

Will I be on medication?

If you need any tablets or medicines when you go home after your operation, you may be given 7 days supply. You will need to make an appointment with your GP for more tablets. If there is a risk of seizures after your operation you will need to take medication; please continue to take these until your doctor advises you to stop. If you develop any side–effects please see your GP; do not just stop taking them.

You may need to take painkillers for some time after you go home. Paracetamol and codeine often work well for pain after craniotomy.

Avoid large amounts of alcohol – an occasional drink should not be a problem

Can I drive?

Following any brain surgery there are restrictions on driving. Following your discharge from hospital, you must contact the DVLA, your insurance company and your employer if your job involves driving.

The length of the restriction depends on what prompted the surgery i.e. tumour, head injury, a bleed, the procedure performed and your individual recovery.

Public service vehicle and heavy goods vehicle driver restrictions differ from ordinary drivers.

The following action is required:

1. Write to:
   Drivers Medical Unit
   DVLA
   Longview Road
   Morriston
   Swansea, SA99 1TU
   or

2. Phone the DVLA

Contact telephone numbers:

Ordinary drivers: 0300 790 6806
LGV, HGV and Public Service drivers: 0300 790 6807

Ensure that you have your driving licence with you when you phone.

You will need to give details of your condition and what medication (especially anti–convulsants) you are currently taking.

Each case is considered individually, the DVLA will seek information from your consultant after obtaining your consent.

If any advice or restrictions are ignored and you continue to drive, your insurance will become invalid.

Are there any special instructions about my wound?

Your stitches/clips may have been removed by the time you are discharged from hospital, if not, your GP practice nurse can remove these. If clips, the ward staff will give you the clip removers which you must take with you to your practice nurse. The ward staff will give you instructions when your stitches/clips need to be removed.
You may wash your hair with care; avoid rubbing the wound for a few weeks. If your wound becomes red, swollen, painful, or begins to discharge, please contact your GP.

It may feel numb around your scar and you may notice a dent where your operation was. Both are normal and usually improve with time. Your hair will grow back and any scarring will fade. You may also feel more comfortable wearing a hat, scarf or wig as long as it doesn’t rub your wound. The ward staff can refer you to the hospital wig specialist.

When can I go back to work?

This will depend on the type of work you do and how fit you feel. Discuss this with your consultant. In some instances change in occupation may be necessary – you will obviously require help and advice if this is the case for you. Sometimes it is possible to go back to work part–time at first.

If you need a sick note to cover your stay in hospital, ask a member of staff prior leaving the ward. Thereafter, sick notes can be obtained from your GP, to claim sickness pay from your employer or benefits from social security.

How will my daily life be affected?

You can resume a normal daily life as soon as you are fit enough. You may feel tired and lethargic for several weeks after the operation, this is not surprising after what you’ve been through and will pass in time. You will be the best judge of what you can and can’t do. Be guided by how you feel and rest when you feel tired. Gradually increase the amount you do until you lead a normal life again. Do not overdo things as this will only lead to exhaustion and frustration.

Sexual relationships can resume as soon as you feel fit to do so. If planning a family, discuss with your GP if you are still taking regular medication

If planning a holiday, wait until you feel fit enough to enjoy your holiday. If you are planning a holiday abroad, you should wait at least 6 weeks before you fly.

You should wait 6–12 weeks before resuming sporting activities, maybe longer. Check with your consultant/GP.

You will be sent an outpatients appointment. It is important that you attend, so that your progress can be assessed and you can bring up any questions you may have.

These are only guidelines – if you have any problems at home, contact your GP for advice.