Activity After Temporal Craniotomy Surgery

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This is a guide for activities and exercises after temporal craniotomy surgery. Your doctor, nurse, or physical therapist will supervise these activities.

Anatomy

You may have pain or problems in the muscles of the head, face and neck area after surgery. There are many things you can do to reduce pain, ease swelling and muscle tension, and return these muscles to their normal strength and flexibility.

The two muscles most often involved are the temporalis and the masseter. The temporalis muscle is above your ear and attaches at the top of your jaw. The masseter muscle is below your cheek and runs down to the bottom of your jaw.

When you have pain or tightness in these muscles, it can affect your jaw, especially how you chew your food or talk. It also can contribute to head-aches and neck pain.

Activity

For the first 48–72 hours after surgery:

Apply an ice pack or cool compress to the painful or swollen area of your face for 5-10 minutes. You can repeat this up to 4 times a day or as needed. You may want to cool the involved area before and after an uncomfortable activity or exercise.

If more than 72 hours after surgery:

Apply an ice pack to the involved area for 3–5 minutes. Then place a warm washcloth on the same area for 5 minutes. Repeat these steps in order 2–3 times, up to 4 times a day or as needed.
Rest

*Give your jaw muscles a rest:*

- stop or reduce talking for a day
- reduce stress which causes muscle tension
- try not to clench your teeth
- avoid foods that are hard to chew
- don’t chew gum
- practice good posture and positioning

Diet

- Try to avoid hard or chewy foods to reduce stress on your jaw and muscles. It also may help to cut your food into small pieces.

  - Avoid:
    - hard bread/roils
    - large sandwiches
    - chips/pretzels/popcorn
    - raw carrots/apples
    - caramel taffy

Posture

Good posture of your head and neck helps avoid strain on your muscles. Keep your head, neck and back in a neutral position. Your head should be right over your shoulders and your shoulders should be right over your hips. Relax the muscles in your face. When you lie down, follow the same rules and support your back and head.

Go through the following steps:

- straighten your back, relax your shoulders
- bring your head over your shoulders
- tuck your chin back
- open your mouth slightly
- touch your tongue to the roof of your mouth
**Massage**

You can gently massage the muscles of your head, face and neck to ease pain and tension. Wash your hands. With the pads of your fingers, gently rub the involved area in a small circular motion 10 times each way. If you can stand it, massage deeper into the muscle. Try not to massage right over your incision until your doctor removes the staples. Repeat the massage 3–4 times a day.

**Exercise**

Try these exercises in front of a mirror at first to be sure you are doing them correctly. When you do the exercises, hold each position 5 counts and repeat each exercise 5 times.

*Jaw Exercises:*

- Slowly open your mouth as wide as you can.

- Slowly move your jaw forward, showing your lower teeth.

- Place the tip of your tongue on the roof of your mouth.

- Now open and close your mouth while keeping your tongue on the roof of your mouth.

- Separate your teeth slightly. Slowly try to move your jaw to the right. Then repeat on the left side.
Neck Exercises

• Slowly curl your chin to your chest. Then slowly raise your head to neutral position.

• Tuck your chin in. Do not tip your head up or down.

• Tuck your chin in and slowly turn your head to look over your right shoulder. Then slowly turn your head to look over your left shoulder.

• Slowly tilt your head to the side bringing your ear towards your shoulder, first to the right and then to the left.

Whom and Where to Call

You may call your neurosurgeon’s office directly at (415) 353-7500. Someone will answer at this number 24 hours a day.