

Patient information

Parotidectomy - removal of parotid gland

Parotidectomy

Your Ear, Nose and Throat surgeon has recommended that your parotid gland be removed (a parotidectomy).

What is the parotid gland?

The parotid gland is a salivary gland that lies immediately in front of the ear. Saliva drains from it through a tube that opens on the inside of the cheek next to the upper back teeth. The parotid gland is most commonly operated on to remove a lump.

The parotid gland is one of many glands that produce the saliva in your mouth. It lies at the angle of the jaw.

Your surgeon has found a swelling in your parotid gland and intends to remove your parotid gland and the swelling it contains. The gland will be sent to the Pathologist for further analysis.

On the day of your operation you must not eat or drink for six hours before going to theatre.

What does the operation involve?

The operation involves making a cut immediately in front of the ear. This cut is extended either downwards into the neck or behind the ear. Once the gland has been removed the incision is held together again with stitches. These need to be removed approximately a week after surgery.

Your operation will be carried out under a general anaesthetic with you completely asleep. It will take approximately two hours.

You will wake up in the recovery room or on the ward. You will have stitches and you may have a small drainage tube under the bandaging of your operation wound which is removed on the first or second day after your operation. The stitches will be removed five to ten days later.

What are the possible problems?

Bleeding from the wound is unlikely to be a problem. If it occurs it usually does so within the first 12 hours of surgery which is why you need to stay in hospital overnight. Infection is uncommon but if your surgeon thinks it may happen to you a short course of antibiotics will be prescribed.

Sometimes saliva leaks out of the wound (salivary fistula). This problem usually settles down on its own but can take several weeks to get better.

Occasionally damage to the facial nerve can occur. This is usually a result of bruising as the facial nerve is held out of the way and protected during surgery. If nerve damage occurs it is usually temporary although it can take several months to fully recover. Only rarely, in the most difficult cases, does permanent damage occur.

What can I expect after the operation?

You usually need a night in hospital following surgery. It is unlikely to be very sore but regular painkillers will be arranged for you. There is relatively little swelling following parotid gland removal. Since part of the gland is taken away it can leave a dent under the skin.

Discharge advice

It is usually advisable to take a week off from work to recover from the surgery.

It is important to keep the wound dry for the first week following surgery. This obviously means you need to take care when washing or shaving.

You will be seen in the Outpatient Department after your surgery. Your surgeon will have the results of the analysis and will advise you then on what further follow up treatment (if any) you may require.

If you require any further advice or information, please contact the ENT ward via the hospital switchboard on 01284 713000.