

The ROYAL MARSDEN

NHS Foundation Trust

GEARS: Your post surgery recovery programme

Head and Neck surgery with free flap reconstruction patient checklist



NHS

Name

Date of surgery

We understand that undertaking cancer surgery might be a stressful period. To alleviate some of the stress on your mind and body, we recommend following the GEARS programme.

GEARS stands for:



Get up



Eat



Analgesia



Remove








Speak up

Day before your surgery






Task	Completed
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Remain active throughout the day- Exercise at least once today to raise your heart rate	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Maintain your normal diet; no food after midnight- Drink carbohydrate preload drink – two sachets (one with your evening meal and one at bedtime)- Only drink water after midnight	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Continue regular medications as directed by your pre-assessment nurse- Tinzaparin injection at 6pm as directed by your pre-assessment nurse	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Shower thoroughly as instructed by your pre-assessment nurse	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Call to check your arrival time and details- Plan details for your discharge to avoid delays	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Morning of surgery






Task	Completed
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Remain active until your surgery	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- No food after midnight- Only drink water until 6am; nothing after 6am- Have your third preload drink finished by 6am	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Continue regular medications as directed by your pre-assessment nurse	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Have a shower before coming to hospital	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ask any questions you have before your surgery- Plan details for your discharge to avoid delays	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Immediately after your surgery (if awake*)






**You may be kept asleep overnight following your surgery – if not, follow the steps below*

Task	Completed
 – Deep breathing exercises throughout the day	<input type="checkbox"/>
 – Nil by mouth	<input type="checkbox"/>
 – Learn to use Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA) – Make sure your team are aware if you are in pain	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 – No actions required today	
 – Raise any questions or concerns to your team	<input type="checkbox"/>






Day 1 after your surgery

Task	Completed
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Deep breathing exercises throughout the day- Sit out of bed twice for an hour- Walk a short distance with the help of physiotherapy/nursing staff if possible	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) will assess your swallowing and direct a gradual increase in oral intake, starting with sips of water- If you had a nasogastric tube placed during surgery, this will be removed once oral intake is adequate	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Make your team aware if you are in pain- Pain team will see you to optimise your pain relief	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- If you have been kept asleep overnight then you will be gradually woken and your team will remove your breathing tube early in the morning- Your team will remove your urinary catheter and help you to mobilise in the afternoon	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Raise any questions or concerns to your team- Continue planning your discharge (refer to SAFER discharge checklist on page 14)	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>






Day 2 after your surgery

Task	Completed
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Deep breathing exercises throughout the day- Sit out of bed twice for three hours- Walk 60 metres twice in the day	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- SLT and surgeons review to guide progression of eating and drinking	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Make your team aware if you are in pain- Pain team will see you to optimise your pain relief- Stop PCA and start regular oral analgesia and laxatives as directed	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Your team will remove your neck drain when output is <30ml/24 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Raise any questions or concerns to your team- Continue planning your discharge (refer to SAFER discharge checklist on page 14)	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>






Day 3 after your surgery

Task	Completed
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Deep breathing exercises throughout the day- Sit out of bed most of the day- Walk 200 metres twice in the day	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- SLT and Surgeon review to guide progression of eating and drinking	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Make your team aware if you are in pain- Pain team will see you to optimise your pain relief- Stop your PCA and start regular oral analgesia and laxatives as directed	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Your team will remove your central venous catheter (CVC) if not needed	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Raise any questions or concerns to your team- Continue planning your discharge (refer to SAFER discharge checklist on page 14)	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>






Day 4 after your surgery

Task	Completed
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Deep breathing exercises throughout the day- Sit out of bed most of the day- Walk 200 metres twice in the day	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- SLT and Surgeons review to guide progression of eating and drinking	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Make your team aware if you are in pain- Pain team will see you to optimise your pain relief if required	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Your team will remove your flap drain when output is <30ml/24 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Raise any questions or concerns to your team- Continue planning your discharge	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>






Day 5 after your surgery

Task	Completed
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Mobilise freely- Stay out of bed for most of the day- Wear your own clothes	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- SLT and Surgeons review to guide progression of eating and drinking	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Make your team aware if you are in pain- Your team will prepare your discharge medications	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Your team will remove your flap drain when output is <30ml/24 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Raise any questions or concerns to your team- Learn how to care for your wounds- Continue planning your discharge (refer to SAFER discharge checklist on page 14)	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Day 6 after your surgery

Task	Completed
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Mobilise freely- Stay out of bed for most of the day- Wear your own clothes	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- SLT and Surgeons review to guide progression of eating and drinking	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Your team will ensure your discharge medications are ready	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Have a shower- Your team will remove any unused cannulas	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Raise any questions or concerns to your team- Ensure you are confident with wound care- Your team may consider discharge today if SAFER discharge checklist is achieved (see page 14)	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Day 7 after your surgery

Task	Completed
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Dress and mobilise freely in preparation for your discharge	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- SLT and Surgeons review to guide progression of eating and drinking	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- You will have all of your medications explained to you before discharge	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Your team will remove all cannulas	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Raise any questions or concerns with your team- Discharge home – SAFER discharge checklist achieved (see page 14)	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Frequently asked questions

When can I start driving?

You can drive as soon as you are off strong painkillers and can confidently perform an emergency stop, if in doubt please contact your insurer.

When is my next appointment?

Your discharge summary will include information on follow up appointments, duration of discharge medication and who to contact if you have questions.

SAFER Clinical Criteria for Discharge (CCD)

1. Mobilising freely; eating and drinking adequately
2. Pain well controlled with oral analgesia
3. Independent with care for wounds and dressings, or District Nurse arranged
4. All lines/drains removed; or plan for removal as outpatient
5. All concerns addressed, contact details given, follow up arranged.

Basic wound care

- Keep wounds clean and dry
- Cleanse in the shower
- Gently dry with a clean towel
- Avoid using soap on the wound
- Unless oozing or rubbing on clothing keep wounds exposed to allow them to heal.

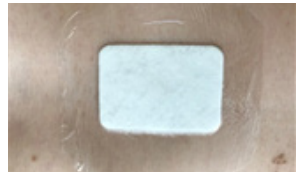
You may have skin clips or stitches. These are usually taken out between 10-14 days after surgery. Your team will give you detailed instructions and will make sure you know where to go to get this done before you leave hospital. This is sometimes done at your local GP practice.



Surgical skin clips



Removable stitches



Tegaderm dressing

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This booklet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this booklet are available on request from: The Royal Marsden Help Centre
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AD-1752-Head and Neck with free flap reconstruction

Contact details

It is **very important** that if you have any concerns or problems after leaving hospital, you contact someone as soon as possible.

Your key worker:

The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline

020 8915 6899 (available 24 hours a day, seven days a week)

Other useful sources of patient information:

Macmillan Cancer Support

www.macmillan.org.uk

0808 808 0000 (free phone)

Macmillan provides information and support on cancer from diagnosis to treatment and beyond. A wide range of resources are also offered.

Cancer Research UK

www.cancerresearchuk.org

CRUK has a patient information website, with information on all types of cancer and treatment choices.



Radiation and
Chemotherapy Services
Folkestone & Faversham