

Vail Valley Ear, Nose & Throat Group, P.C.
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POST-OP INSTRUCTIONS

TRIPOD (CHEEK) FRACTURE

A fracture of the cheek bone (called a “tripod” fracture) is usually repaired via incisions under the lip and possibly on the inside of the lower eyelid. The eyelid incision is often extended through the outside corner of the eye, so you may have a few stitches in this region. These are absorbable stitches and do not need to be removed. After surgery you will have a considerable amount of swelling of the cheek and eyelids, and often the eye will swell shut. This swelling will go down after 3 to 5 days, so you should be able to see out of the eye by this time.

WOUND CARE: After surgery you should keep your head elevated above the level of the heart for at least 24 hours. Thus, you should sleep the first night with your head elevated. Also, keep an icepack over the cheek as much as possible for the first 24 hours. However, be careful not to frost bite either the skin or the cornea. I recommend purchasing a couple of bags of frozen peas. Place a towel between the bag of peas and your skin, and keep switching the bags back and forth between your cheek and the freezer. The bag of peas is light and conforms well to the curves of the face. You will be given ophthalmic antibiotic ointment to use on the incision to the side of the eye. Use this ointment only, and not any over the counter ointments. Apply a small amount of the ointment to the incision twice a day. You may go ahead and shower the day after surgery, but do not scrub the skin in the region of the stitches.

ACTIVITIES: I recommend avoiding any strenuous physical activity for at least 2 weeks after surgery. Thus, no heavy lifting, running, skiing, etc. This is to keep the swelling down and to avoid any bleeding into the eye after surgery. Also, no heavy nose blowing and sneeze through your mouth for 2 weeks after surgery to avoid blowing air into the eye socket.

DIET: You should eat only soft foods for one week after surgery. Do not disturb the stitches under the lip.

MEDICATIONS: You will be given some pain medications and antibiotics after surgery. Follow the directions on the bottles.

FOLLOW UP: I should see you in my clinic approximately 1 week after surgery. Please call and make an appointment, if one has not already been made.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS: Complications to look out for include bleeding from the eye, a sudden increase in swelling or pain, decrease in your vision, or an increase in redness around the eye. If you experienced numbness in the cheek prior to surgery, it may take a few days or weeks for this to resolve. Please call me immediately if any of these complications occur.