



CARE INSTRUCTIONS

KAISER PERMANENTE

Laryngectomy: Before Your Surgery

What is laryngectomy?

Laryngectomy is the removal of all or part of the voice box (larynx). The voice box is in the neck and contains the vocal cords. It also helps you swallow and breathe. It is taken out to treat cancer of the larynx.

You will be asleep during the surgery. The doctor will take out all or part of the voice box through a cut (incision) in the front of your neck. How much the doctor takes out depends on how large the cancer is and how far it has spread. You will have stitches or staples in the incision.

Your ability to talk after surgery depends on how much of the voice box is removed. If all of the larynx is removed, you will not be able to talk. In this case, the doctor will also make a hole in your neck to help you breathe. This is called a tracheotomy, and the hole is called a stoma.

You will probably have a tube in your neck to drain fluid from the incision for 1 to 4 days after surgery. The stitches or staples will be taken out 1 to 2 weeks after surgery. The scar will fade over time. For a week or more after surgery you will need to get food through a tube that goes into your nose and down your throat to your stomach. Your throat will heal in 2 to 3 weeks.

You can go home 1 to 2 weeks after surgery. You will probably be able to return to work 6 to 8 weeks after surgery. It may take 3 to 4 months to feel normal again. Speech therapy will help you learn new ways to communicate if you cannot talk normally after surgery. Most people can do their normal activities after a laryngectomy.

Losing your ability to talk can be very upsetting and hard to accept. This is especially true for outgoing people. It can affect your self-image and lead to depression. If you need help after surgery, you may want to see a counselor.

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Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

What happens before surgery?

Having surgery can be stressful. This information will help you understand what you can expect and how to safely prepare for surgery.

Preparing for surgery

- Bring a list of questions to ask your doctors. It is important that you understand exactly what surgery is planned, the risks, benefits, and other options before your surgery.
- Tell your doctors ALL the medicines, vitamins, supplements, or herbal remedies you are taking. Keep a list of these with you, and bring this with you to every appointment. You will be told which medicine to take or to stop before your surgery.
- Some medicines, such as aspirin or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), and certain vitamins and herbal remedies can increase the risk of bleeding or interact with anesthesia. You may be asked to stop these a week before surgery.
- Before your surgery, you will speak with an anesthesia provider to discuss your anesthetic options, including the risks, benefits, and alternatives to each. This may be on the phone or in person.

Taking care of yourself before surgery

- Build healthy habits into your life. Changes are best made several weeks before surgery, since your body may react to sudden changes in your habits.
 - Stay as active as you can.
 - Eat a healthy diet.
 - Cut back or quit alcohol and tobacco.
- If you have an advance directive—which may include a living will and a durable power of attorney for health care—let your doctor know. If you do not have one, you may want to prepare one so your doctor and loved ones know your health care wishes. Doctors recommend that everyone prepare these papers before surgery, regardless of the type of surgery or condition.

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What happens on the day of surgery?

- Follow the instructions exactly about when to stop eating and drinking, or your surgery may be canceled. If your doctor has instructed you to take your medicines on the day of surgery, please do so using only a sip of water.
- Take a bath or shower before you come in for your surgery. Do not apply lotions, perfumes, deodorants, or nail polish.
- Do NOT shave the surgical site yourself.
- Remove all jewelry, piercings, and contact lenses.
- Leave your valuables at home.

At the hospital or surgery center

- Bring a picture ID.
- Before surgery you will be asked to repeat your full name, what surgery you are having, and what part of your body is being operated on. The area for surgery may be marked.
- A small tube (IV) will be placed in a vein, to give you fluids and medicine to help you relax. Because of the combination of medicines given to keep you comfortable, you may not remember much about the operating room.
- You will be kept comfortable and safe by your anesthesia provider. The anesthesia will make you sleep.
- As you wake up in the recovery room, the nurse will check to be sure you are stable and comfortable.
- You will not be able to eat normally until your throat has healed. You will get food through a tube that goes into your nose and down into your stomach.

Going home

- Be sure you have someone to drive you home.
- For your safety, you should not drive until you are no longer taking pain medicines and you can move and react easily.
- Arrange for extra help at home after surgery, especially if you live alone or provide care for another person.

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- You will be given more specific instructions about recovering from your surgery, including activity and when you may return to work.

When should you call your doctor?

- You have questions or concerns.
- You don't understand how to prepare for your surgery.
- You become ill before the surgery (such as fever, flu, or a cold).
- You need to reschedule or have changed your mind about having the surgery.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <http://www.kp.org>

Enter C978 in the search box to learn more about "**Laryngectomy: Before Your Surgery**".

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