

# Stroke treatments



## Craniotomy

### What Is It?

A craniotomy is a surgery in which a part of the skull (*bone flap*) is removed to get to the brain. The piece of skull is put back in place after surgery. This surgery may be done for many reasons, including:

- To treat cancer in the brain.
- To remove a pool of blood (*hematoma*) in the brain.
- To treat bleeding inside your skull.
- To take out a tumor or growth.
- To relieve swelling in the brain.
- To treat infections.
- To place stimulators on your brain.
- To treat a brain injury.

### What happens before the procedure?

#### **Staying hydrated**

Follow instructions from your doctor about hydration, which may include:

- Up to 2 hours before the procedure – you may continue to drink clear liquids, such as water, clear fruit juice, black coffee, and plain tea.

#### **Eating and drinking restrictions**

Follow instructions from your doctor about eating and drinking, which may include:

- 8 hours before the procedure – stop eating heavy meals or foods such as:
  - Meat.

- Fried foods.
- Fatty foods.
- 6 hours before the procedure – stop eating light meals or foods, such as:
  - Toast.
  - Cereal.
- 6 hours before the procedure – stop drinking milk or drinks that contain milk.
- 2 hours before the procedure – stop drinking clear liquids.

#### **Medicines**

- Ask your doctor about:
  - Changing or stopping your normal medicines. This is important if you take diabetes medicines or blood thinners.
  - Taking medicines such as aspirin and ibuprofen. These medicines can thin your blood. **Do not** take these medicines before your procedure if your doctor tells you not to.
- You may be given antibiotic medicine to help prevent infection.

#### **General instructions**

- Ask your doctor how your surgical site will be marked or identified.
- You may be asked to shower and wash your hair with a germ-killing soap.
- Plan to have someone take you home from the hospital or clinic. Also, plan to have someone help you with activities while you heal.

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## What happens during the procedure?

- To lower your risk of infection:
  - Your health care team will wash or sanitize their hands.
  - Your skin will be washed with soap.
- The surgery site will be prepared. Hair will be removed from that part of the scalp.
- An IV tube will be put into one of your veins.
- You will be given one or more of the following:
  - A medicine to help you relax (sedative).
  - A medicine to make you fall asleep (general anesthetic).
- Your head will be held in place with a device. Pins will go into your skull so your head cannot move.
- A flap will be cut in the scalp. Small holes will then be drilled in your skull.
- A bone saw will be used to connect the small holes and to cut out part of your skull.
- After part of your skull is removed, work will be done on the brain.
- A drain may be put inside your head to take out blood or fluids that might collect after surgery.
- The bone will be put back in place. It will then be attached using plates, wires, or stitches (*sutures*).
- Your scalp will be closed with stitches or staples.
- A bandage (*dressing*) will be placed where your scalp was closed.

The procedure may vary among doctors and hospitals.

## What happens after the procedure?

- Your blood pressure, heart rate, breathing rate, and blood oxygen level will be checked until the medicines you were given have worn off.
- You may be given a helmet to wear.

## Summary

- A craniotomy is a surgery in which part of your skull is removed to get to the brain.
- Ask your doctor about changing or stopping your regular medicines before surgery.
- After surgery, that part of the skull will be put back in place. It will then be attached using plates, wires, or stitches.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.

### Get help right away if you have:

- ▲ A sudden, severe headache with no known cause
- ▲ Nausea or vomiting occurring with another symptom
- ▲ Sudden weakness or numbness of your face, arm or leg, especially on one side of your body
- ▲ Sudden trouble walking or difficulty moving your arms or legs
- ▲ Sudden confusion