VAGUS NERVE STIMULATOR

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW AFTER SURGERY?

- The VNS starts working as soon as it is placed.
- You have a small incision the neck.
- You have a small incision either below the collarbone in the chest wall, in the armpit, or on the upper back.
- Your skin incisions may look puffy.
- You may run a low-grade fever. (less than 101 is okay)

During VNS stimulation you may:

- Have changes in your voice tone or hoarseness.
- Have trouble swallowing.
- Have pain or discomfort.

You may be sent home the same day of surgery.

You may be seen by your neurosurgeon one to two weeks after surgery. Your neurologist will see you in two weeks.

WILL THERE BE A DRESSING?

There may be a gauze pad covered with a clear plastic dressing over the two incision areas.

- Keep these dressings clean and dry.
- Dressings can be removed on the 3rd day after surgery.
- Your doctors will tell you when you can take a shower and tub bath.
- Avoid strenuous activities that make you sweat. Sweating carries bacteria into the incision site.

WHAT CAN I DO FOR PAIN?

Your doctor may order pain medicine. A non-aspirin pain reliever such as Tylenol® or children’s Motrin® may also be used.

HOW ACTIVE CAN I BE AFTER SURGERY?

Depending on your incision site, you can return to normal activity when you feel ready. Do not take gym class, play sports, climb or play rough until it is OK’d by the doctors.
WHEN SHOULD I CALL MY DOCTOR?

Call your neurosurgeon if:

- Area around incision becomes reddened.
- Yellow discharge is noted from incision.
- You have a high fever or a fever that lasts longer than 48-72 hours past surgery.

Call your neurologist if the VNS device:

1. Becomes uncomfortable.
2. Stimulation seems to be coming on too often.
3. Stimulation stops working.
4. You have concerns about the stimulator’s operation or effects.
5. There seems to be problems with swallowing or sleeping.
6. A small child who cannot talk starts acting “different” than usual.

Instruct your family to call your doctor if you develop sleep apnea or “pauses” in your regular breathing while you are asleep.

USING THE MAGNET

- The VNS system delivers stimulation automatically: lasting 30 seconds on and 5 minutes off.
- The magnet can also be used to deliver extra electronic stimulation when you feel a seizure coming on.
- Patients or family can use the magnet to stimulate an electrical discharge. This extra stimulation often stops the seizure, shortens it, or reduces recovery time.
- You can also use the magnet to turn off the programmed stimulation for a period of time. This may be helpful in situations where you plan to speak publicly, while you are eating if the stimulation alters swallowing, or if you are experiencing pain or unusual discomfort.

Remember to refer to your VNS booklet for questions about the magnets and their use.

My Notes:

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These instructions are only general guidelines. Your doctors may give you specific instructions. If you have any questions or concerns, please call your doctor.
I have received a copy of these Home Instructions and had them explained to my satisfaction.