Post-operative Positioning Following Vitrectomy Surgery

Why is post-operative head positioning necessary?

During vitrectomy surgery, a gas bubble or silicone oil may be used to help close a macular hole or seal a retinal tear from a retinal detachment. Head positioning is needed to assure that the bubble presses against the hole or tear so it can seal. The bubble floats toward the ceiling. Your retinal surgeon will ask you to place your head so that the bubble rises toward the retina in the back of your eye. For example, a macular hole is in the center of the retina so your nose will be pointed directly at the floor. A retinal detachment repair may mean you will be lying on your side or tilting your head.
Post-operative positioning chairs

Using a post-op positioning chair will let you be more comfortable. You will be in the correct position, especially if you need to have your face down. Before your surgery you will be given information to order what is needed. It is strongly recommended that you use this equipment, especially after macular hole surgery.

Common questions about positioning after surgery

1. **How long do I have to position?** After macular hole surgery, 1 week of face down positioning is common. Your retinal surgeon will go over the needed time with you.
2. **Can I take breaks during the day?** As a rule of thumb, you should be positioning 50 minutes of every hour. You should take 10 minute breaks to stretch your neck muscles, use the bathroom, shower, and eat.
3. **Are there other ways to position?** Some patients find it more comfortable to sit in a chair and lay their head on a pillow on a desk or table. You can also sit in a chair with your nose pointed at the floor without a positioning device. This may be more of a strain on your neck. Walking around the house with your nose pointed at the floor is okay for short walks.
4. **How do I put my drops in?** You will have to look up at the ceiling to put the drops in. This short break will not cause any damage.
5. **Do I hurt my eye by not positioning?** No, this will not hurt your eye but your surgical repair may not be as successful.
6. **May I read or use my computer?** You may read a book or use your computer placed below you.
7. **Can I watch TV?** You can watch TV with a mirror below you that is pointed towards the TV. This is safe and will help pass the time. The rented positioning equipment has a mirror for watching TV.
8. **How about sleeping?** The positioning equipment has a donut pillow that can be used in bed. This can be difficult and not as comfortable to use. Lying on your side and turning your nose towards the mattress is a good position. Your doctor can show you how this is done.

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Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person’s health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 1/2016 University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7512