

Preparing for a Craniotomy

Craniotomy is a surgical opening made in the skull. It is made to treat several types of problems in the brain. Special tools are used to remove a piece of the skull. This lets the surgeon reach the brain for the treatment. The most common reasons for having a craniotomy include blood clot, brain swelling, tumors, aneurysms and arteriovenous malformations (AVM), and brain abscess.

As your surgery nears, you may wonder about your future healthcare needs. You may also have questions about how to get ready for your craniotomy. The information below can help.



Arranging for the future

You may have concerns about your ability to make decisions about treatment in the future. Advance directives that include living wills and legal power of medical attorney can help ease such worries. Recording your wishes on these special legal forms helps ensure that you will get the care you want even if you can no longer make decisions. Your healthcare provider or the hospital can provide the forms that apply in your state.

Before your surgery

In many cases, a craniotomy is a planned procedure. Other times it's done as an emergency procedure. If there is time before surgery, you may be told to do the following:

- Weeks ahead of time, you may be asked to donate blood for your surgery. You may also be told to stop taking aspirin and other medicines that thin the blood. If you smoke, you should stop now.
- Shortly before the day of your craniotomy, you will have a medical exam. This ensures that you are healthy enough for surgery.
- Follow any directions you are given for taking medicines. Pay special attention to when you need to stop taking medicines that thin the blood. Also note when you need to stop eating or drinking before surgery.