

What Happens After the Surgery?

After the surgery you will be taken to a special monitoring unit in the hospital while you wake up from the anaesthetic. Some people may need to spend a day or two in an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) so that you receive specialist monitoring while you recover. After that you are moved to a general ward, usually in the neurology department within the hospital. The amount of time you spend in hospital after surgery depends on how you recover, but most people are out of hospital within a week.

It is not unusual for your head, and sometimes your face, to be swollen after the operation. You may also feel some pain, but people usually find that any swelling and pain lessens over the first few days.

Depending on your type of surgery, you may not be able to return to work or study for up to three months. Any major operation involving a general anaesthetic can make you feel very tired, so it's a good idea to relax for the first few weeks and slowly become more active. You may even find that in the first few weeks after surgery you are sleeping a lot more than usual, even sleeping during the day. This is all part of your recovery.

Your doctor, and others involved in your surgical care, will advise you of any instructions for how to safely recover at home.

Before leaving hospital, follow-up appointments with your neurologist and neurosurgeon will be made for you – usually about four weeks after surgery.

You will often be asked to see a neuropsychologist within the first year after your surgery. This is to assess your cognitive skills and abilities post-surgery, and is compared against the results from your pre-surgical testing. This is also a good opportunity to raise any concerns you have noticed about your thinking, memory or mood.

Recovering from surgery can bring on a range of emotions, and some may also experience post-operative depression. Some people may feel disappointed or sad if the surgery wasn't as successful as anticipated, or if medication is ongoing. People may feel very excited or relieved when seizures stop completely or reduce in frequency. But sometimes this change can be difficult too, often because adjusting to a new life without seizures feels unusual or stressful – not just for yourself but sometimes others close to you. In most cases these reactions and feelings are temporary and can be managed through counselling and other support strategies.