When You Have a Gas Bubble in Your Eye

Face-down positioning after retinal surgery is one of the hardest things we ask our patients to do. Maintaining the correct position is essential to the success of the surgery. Incorrect positioning can result in glaucoma and cataracts. Face-down positioning is required at all times except for application of eye drops and taking your medication. The face-down position keeps the bubble where it belongs to aid in the healing of the retina. Your body reabsorbs the gas bubble in the weeks following surgery.

Positioning
• When sitting or standing, your face should be downward, parallel to the floor, with your eyes facing straight down. Do not look to your right or left. Your eyes must be focused on the floor.

• While sitting, you can rest your elbows on your lap, with your forehead in your hands, looking down. If you are seated at a table, you can place a pillow on the table in front of you, place your arms on the pillow and rest your forehead on your arms while looking down.

• When walking around, you must keep your head down, eyes looking at your toes and not in front of you.

• You can read with a book in your lap or listen to books on tape. You also can put a small TV on the floor beneath you to watch television. You can use reflective mirrors to watch TV as long as your head is down.

• While in bed, you must remain in a face down position. You can lie on your stomach or ___________ side with a pillow under your ear. Your face should be turned so that your nose is pointed toward the mattress, as though you were looking through the mattress to the floor.

• One helpful hint to stay on your side in bed is to roll up blankets and put them behind you, under the fitted sheet. You can “hug” a pillow in front of your chest and abdomen, rolling into the pillow to keep you turned comfortably toward the mattress. Wearing a pocket T-shirt backwards with a tennis ball in the pocket also can serve as a reminder to stay on your side.

Eating and drinking
• You must eat and drink in the face-down position. One way to eat is to put the food in a chair directly in front of you. You also can put the food on a tray in your lap or on a low table. Your food must be below you, so your eyes continue looking downward.

• You must drink all liquids through a straw, being careful when you drink hot liquids so you do not burn your mouth or tongue.

Important information
• For your drive home, you should ride in the middle of the back seat. If you can, avoid sitting behind seat backs and air bags. For longer distances, place several pillows on your lap and rest your forehead on your hands, with your arms folded on top of the pillows.

• A green bracelet will be applied to your wrist after surgery. This bracelet advises health care providers that you have a gas bubble in your eye and warns them against the use of nitrous oxide – an anesthetic gas. Inform your doctor or dentist if you are undergoing any surgical or dental procedures or hyperbaric oxygen therapy. Your ophthalmologist will tell you when the bracelet can be removed.
• You are not to travel in an airplane or travel to a higher elevation until your surgeon tells you it is safe. Changes in atmospheric pressure with a gas bubble can result in blindness. If you have eye pain while traveling, change your route to head for a lower altitude or stop until eye pressure equilibrates and pain subsides.

• There are rental equipment companies available in the Milwaukee area to assist you with maintaining the proper head positioning. Brochures are available from your nurse.

This is a difficult lifestyle adjustment, but it is only for a limited time. Ask your family, friends, and neighbors to assist you in having a successful retinal surgery.