

Inspire Post-Op Instructions

Hypoglossal Nerve Stimulator — Your complete guide to recovery and device activation

The Procedure

The procedure to implant Inspire is typically an outpatient procedure lasting about 2 hours (1 hour for surgery and 1 hour for going to sleep and waking up). Your surgeon will test the Inspire device during surgery before you wake up to ensure the device is functioning as expected.

There are two incisions: one at the upper right neck and one just below the collar bone.

Pain Expectations

Pain after the procedure varies but for most patients is not severe. Pain will usually resolve within 7–14 days. You will be given a small amount of narcotic pain medication, but you can supplement with Tylenol and Ibuprofen assuming there is no other medical reason you cannot take these medications. You can use ice on and off as feels comfortable. Women may find it beneficial to wear a sports bra during the early healing period.

You may have pain:

- In your throat and nose from having the breathing tube in place
- In your neck, jaw, ear, or tongue from the surgery
- Over your chest incision
- The back of your head or scalp due to positioning during surgery

Wound Care

All wounds will have Steri-Strips placed over them which can be left in place until you are seen for your first postoperative appointment. If these fall off prior to your post-operative visit, it is OK.

Pressure dressings will be placed over the two incisions and should be left in place for 48 hours after the procedure, after which they may be removed (leaving the Steri-Strips in place). You may shower after the pressure dressings are removed.

Swelling and minor bruising at incision sites is expected and will typically improve over the first 2 weeks. Most patients can expect some swelling under the jaw that will give the appearance of a “double chin.” This will improve over 2–4 weeks. The area under the chin can remain firm for some time and is due to swelling in the salivary gland that has to be moved during the surgery.

Icing Instructions

Neck incision: We strongly encourage you to ice your neck during the first 24–48 hours post surgery.

Chest incision: You may also ice your chest if you experience discomfort or swelling.

- Place a towel or washcloth over the surgical site to act as a barrier between your skin and the ice pack.
- Apply the ice or gel pack for 20 minutes at a time.
- You may repeat this about 4 times per day.
- Please allow a minimum period of 30 minutes to elapse between icing sessions.

DIY Gel Pack

A gel pack can be made by placing liquid dish soap in a freezer Ziploc bag. Fill the bag to about 1/2 to 2/3 full. Place the bag flat on a freezer shelf to allow it to harden. It will form a gel that will conform to your body. The gel pack can be refrozen after you use it.

Neck Roll Exercises

Please perform neck rolls during the first four weeks. Slowly rotate your head around in a circle ten times, then reverse direction. Do this three times a day for four weeks. This helps ensure scar tissue doesn't form in the lead connecting the neck and chest implant.

Inspire Sleep App & Remote

Download the Inspire Sleep App (by Sleep Apnea Innovation), which has a wealth of resources to guide you through this process. You will use this app with your remote after activation to track your stats.

You will be given an Inspire remote at the time of surgery. Bring this to your activation appointment. You do not need to bring it to your 1-week post-op appointment. If you lose the remote or desire a second remote, it can be ordered at a cost of \$299.

Activity Restrictions

- **First 2 weeks:** No strenuous activity or heavy lifting (more than 15 lbs).
- **First 4 weeks:** Avoid weight training (bench press, heavy weights) and activities requiring rapid movements (golf, tennis, chopping wood, etc.).
- **Work:** Expect to take two weeks off. Some patients begin light duty within a few days, but plan for two weeks as everyone reacts differently.
- You may resume a normal diet after surgery.
- If applicable, refrain from shaving over the incision site for 2 weeks.

Warning Signs — Call the Office If You Experience:

Fever of 100.4° or higher, excessive swelling at any incision site, bleeding from incisions, slurred speech, difficulty swallowing, or shortness of breath.

Recovery Timeline

Important

The stimulator device will NOT be active in the immediate postoperative period. No sensations of stimulation should be expected until your activation visit.

Week 1 — Post-Op Visit

Your wound will be evaluated and you will discuss the plan for your activation visit. The device will remain inactive.

Week 4 — Activation Visit

Your physician will check the device and turn it on. You'll learn to use your Inspire remote. Therapy starts at a low level — increase stimulation every 7 days as tolerated. If you've been using CPAP, stop two weeks prior to this visit. Once activated, use the device every time you sleep (including naps). Expect an initial pulse of tongue motion, followed by a ~30-minute delay before therapy begins. A pause feature allows you to temporarily disable it for nighttime wake-ups.

Week 10 — Device Check

Your surgeon will confirm good tongue motion and respiratory sensing and make any needed programming adjustments. Your sleep study date will be confirmed at this visit.

Month 3–4 — Sleep Study

An in-lab or at-home sleep study will check the efficacy of the Inspire device. A follow-up visit will review the results and make any necessary adjustments.

Long-Term Follow-Up

You will need to be seen a minimum of once every six months for battery checks, efficacy and usage checks, and to look for any possible device malfunctions.

Technical Support

If you have any technical problems with your Inspire device, call Inspire anytime: **1-844-OSA-HELP**. For all other questions, please contact your implanting surgeon's office.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How does the Inspire device work?

The Inspire device stimulates the hypoglossal nerve, which moves your tongue. This pulls the tongue forward toward the teeth and creates more of an open airway so that you have less snoring and breathing pauses at night. The stimulation occurs with each breath — it synchronizes so your tongue pushes forward with each in-breath and relaxes with each out-breath.

2. It doesn't seem like the device is synchronizing with my breathing.

The stimulation will not reliably synchronize with your breathing while you are awake. While awake, you will feel a regular pattern of stimulation. Once you are in a regular breathing pattern during sleep, the synchronization will be more accurate.

3. When I wake up at night, I can't feel it working.

That's OK! Especially in the beginning, the stimulation is set to a low level. You may not feel stimulation at all, but that doesn't mean it is not on. It's also common that the stimulation feels stronger initially and becomes less noticeable over time. This is normal — just your body adapting.

4. Will it stop my snoring?

Maybe, maybe not. Most people have a significant improvement in snoring, but there is no guarantee that your snoring will be eliminated with Inspire.

5. How long will it take to see results?

This is highly variable, but the best advice is that this is a “marathon, not a sprint.” Some may feel early benefits in the first weeks, but some patients may take months or even a year to find the best settings. As a rule, you should be on your way to better sleep in the first three months of therapy.

6. What if the stimulation is uncomfortable or wakes me up?

Inspire is designed to work while you sleep, so you should not be aware of the stimulation. If it wakes you, use the pause button (delays therapy ~15 minutes). For persistent issues, your surgeon can make “comfort adjustments” — from simple voltage changes to complex electrode configuration modifications. There are thousands of settings, and the right one can usually be found.

7. Will I sleep better/longer/deeper?

Inspire is designed to treat your sleep apnea — not insomnia. You should sleep with fewer breathing events, and some patients do sleep longer or deeper. However, if you have significant insomnia, it may not improve. Have realistic expectations and work with your care team to manage all sleep issues.

8. Can I get an MRI?

Yes! However, there are restrictions. The Inspire device is MRI-conditional — typically requiring a 1.5T (not 3T) MRI. Certain locations may not be able to accommodate the scan. If you anticipate needing an MRI, discuss this with your surgeon ahead of time. Contact Inspire for current MRI guidelines.

9. What are the expected results?

On average, we expect a 70–80% improvement in apnea levels (AHI) as well as improvements in sleepiness. Every patient is different, and it is impossible to predict any single patient's outcome.

10. What if I still have significant sleep apnea after the first study?

That's OK! In up to 30% of cases, additional adjustments are needed. Typically, an Awake Endoscopy is performed in the office — a relatively painless procedure using a small camera to find the best Inspire settings for you. A follow-up sleep study then confirms the improved result.

11. Should I use scar cream?

Not necessary, and there is limited benefit. However, it is OK to use starting two weeks after surgery. Avoid any cream containing antibiotics. Use sunblock over the incisions and limit sun exposure to the incision areas in the first year.

These instructions are intended as a general guide. Always follow the specific instructions provided by your surgeon. If you have questions or concerns at any time, please contact your implanting surgeon's office.

www.SleepApneaImplant.org