Face-Down Recovery After Retinal Surgery

What is face-down recovery after retinal surgery?

After some types of retinal surgery, you will need to keep your head in a face-down position. This is because a gas bubble has been put in your eye. Recovering with your head down allows the bubble to float into the correct position. The bubble holds the retina in place to heal correctly.

Your doctor will tell you how long you need to stay face down. It could be anywhere from a few days to a week or more. Over time, your eye fills with its own fluid, and the gas bubble disappears.

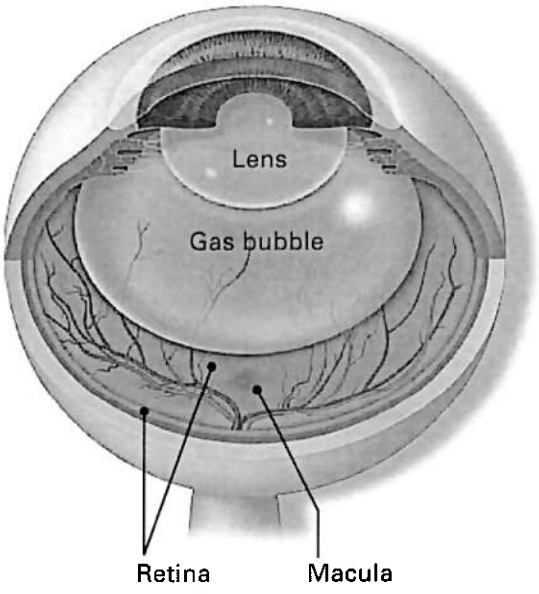

Figure 1: Incorrect position. When looking up, the gas bubble will float incorrectly in your eye. Your retina may not heal successfully in this position.

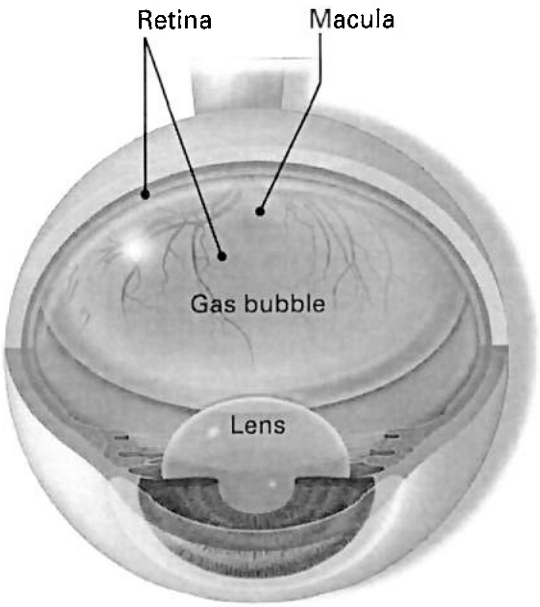

Figure 2: Correct position. When seated or lying face down, the bubble will float in the correct position in your eye, putting pressure on the retina and helping it reattach to the back of the eye.

Important things to know about face-down recovery:

- You must stay face down at all times, unless your eye surgeon tells you otherwise. This means staying face down when you stand, sit, eat, walk, and sleep. To stay safe, have someone with you when you walk around.
- Your surgery may not work if you do not recover in the recommended position. This is because lying in the wrong position puts pressure on other parts of your eye. That can lead to other eye problems.

- You cannot fly in an airplane, go to mountains or high altitudes or scuba dive until the gas bubble is gone. Altitude changes can cause your eye pressure to rise. That can lead to problems with the bubble.

Make your face-down or sideways recovery easier while:

- **Sitting**: Fold your arms on a table and lay your forehead on your arms.
- **Lying down:** Lie face down on a pillow; have the recovering side of your face hang off the edge of the bed. This helps reduce pain and keeps pressure off your operated eye.
- **Or anytime, by using** special equipment to make it easier to stay face down or sideways. You can rent or buy equipment such as:
  - **Face-down chairs.** These can adjust to provide support for your head and neck while you sit.
  - **Tabletop face cradles.** These allow you to keep your hands free while sitting at the table.
  - **Face-down pillows.** These have a space cut out for your face to help you sleep more comfortably.
  - **Face-down mirrors.** These are angled to let you see people or objects in front of you. That way you can watch TV or speak directly with visitors.

Ask your ophthalmologist for information about renting or buying face-down recovery equipment. These items will help make your recovery more comfortable.

Summary

After some types of retinal surgery, it is very important to stay in the face-down recovery position. Not doing this can lead to other eye problems and affect the outcome of your surgery.

Talk with your ophthalmologist about tips and items that help make face-down recovery easier.

Watch a video about face-down recovery:
aao.info/facedown

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