



IMPORTANCE OF HAIR CARE IN PERIOPERATIVE PERIOD

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Care of hair in perioperative period is often neglected. Even during the pre-anesthetic checkup the instructions for hair is missing. We tend to forget hair both as a risk factor for difficult intubation as well as for anesthetic complication such as alopecia.

- Therefore, we suggest following instructions for hair care Hair should be washed the night before or the morning of surgery using a mild shampoo. Hair products such as hair spray, mousse, gels, hair extensions and wigs should be avoided as they are highly flammable and risk fire during surgery. Even, Bobby pins and metallic clips are avoided as they are very firm objects and can easily cause pressure points if positioned under the weight of the patient's head. It can also be dangerous if patient is about to enter an MRI scanner during intra or post operative period.
- During the preanaesthetic checkup hair is usually covered with saree, scarf or duppatta specially in Indian scenario. Long hairs in females are made to bun, ponytail or braid which are considered to be a predictor of difficult mask ventilation. In Indian females usually bun and pony is made over occiput. It makes the head unstable and placing such patient in the sniffing position is difficult as the bun and pony prevents extension of the atlanto- occipital joint.
- It is advisable to make bun at the top of head (ie proximal to frontal) or ponytail on either sides of head as shown in figure 1. In both the cases hair should be covered with disposable head cap.
- Untied hairs are also not suitable. At times it become cumbersome to manage during the intraoperative period. Hairs can get caught in IV lines, monitors cables or OT table causing difficulty to anesthesiologist and surgeon specially in head and neck surgeries.
- Suboptimal or improper care of hair during the intraoperative period may lead to pressure or traction alopecia. It is a rare, and often-preventable complication caused by excessive pressure inducing local ischemia during the procedure, resulting in the loss of hair.[1] It is usually seen in patients having big poorly managed hair underlying the weight of the head. Traction alopecia can be seen in very tight pony, weaves and braids left in for prolonged periods of time. Therefore, patient undergoing prolonged anaesthesia (greater than 3 hours), should be informed about the alopecia risk as it has potential medico-legal implication.[2]
- Regular head turning schedule, proper care of hair and vigilance for the condition should be used as prophylaxis to prevent such alopecia.[3]

Conclusion:

It is important to recognize the importance of hair care in perioperative period. A low bun or a low ponytail can present as difficult ventilation and intubation. Negligence in hair care can lead to permanent alopecia which has its own medico-legal consequences.

PATIENTS POSTED FOR SURGERY SHOULD NEATLY TIE UP THEIR HAIR AS ADVISED BELOW (Figure 1)

TIE UP YOUR HAIR AS

Bun on top (Proximal to frontal)



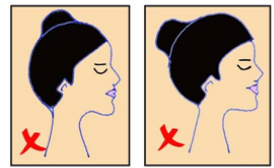
Pony on top



Pony made as bun on top



Pony on either sides

DO NOT TIE AS

Bun at wrong places



Pony at occiput



Untied hairs

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