

1000 Oakesdale Ave SW, Suite 100 Renton, WA 98057 WashingtonOSIC.com

<u>Cervical Surgery</u> <u>Post-Operative Instructions</u>

Immediate post-op general instructions

- It is **normal** to have a *mild sore throat, difficulty swallowing and/or hoarseness* for **several weeks.** Over-the-counter throat lozenges are helpful. *if the condition worsens*, contact your physician.
- If you have severe difficulty breathing, feel tightness in your throat or inability to swallow you may have an airway compromise and it is a *medical emergency*. <u>SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION AT ONCE</u>.
- When sitting, use a straight back chair to ensure proper support, but *do not sit for more than a half hour at a time.* You may increase your sitting time slowly.
- You can expect to be tired post-operative, **nap if necessary.**
- You may lay on your back or side, but not your stomach.
- Avoid housework, especially vacuuming and sweeping.
- It is okay to cook, but do not lift anything heavier than 10 pounds, and no bending, twisting, or stooping.
- You will wear a hard-cervical collar as directed by your physician.
- If your pain increases this is a red flag telling you to REST.
- Do not engage in strenuous activity for at least 10 weeks.

1st week post-operative

- You may ride in a vehicle as a passenger, but **no driving**, and **no extended road trips**. Limit your *time in the car to less than 20 minutes*, if possible.
- Walk around your home on a smooth, flat surface. Try to be up and moving for half of the day.
- You may use the stairs with assistance.
- DO NO T lift anything over 10 pounds.
- Take pain medication *as directed*. Don't try to "tough it out". You will heal quicker if you feel better.
- Refrain from sexual activity for 3 weeks.

2nd week post-operative

- *Be sure to attend your first post-op appointment.* You may discuss when to return to work with your doctor at this time, that will be a patient specific.
- An exercise program will be discussed at your first visit.
- It will be **okay to drive if you are off all pain medication** and feeling strong.
- Increase your walking to 1 mile per day if tolerated well.
- You may do light housework, but still no vacuuming or sweeping.



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3rd week post-

<u>operative</u>

- You may resume sexual activity if you are relatively pain free.
- You may **increase walking time** and house work as tolerated.
- If you need to lift anything, do not exceed 25 pounds, and use proper body mechanics.
- You may use a hot tub or spa *IF your incision has healed well and there* is *no remaining scabs*.

General Post-Operative Information and Instructions Following Cervical Surgery

Pain

It is completely *normal* to have **pain**, **muscle spasms**, **numbness**, **or tingling** after surgery.

These symptoms should *gradually resolve* as *your* muscles *and nerves heal*. Numbness and tingling are usually the last symptoms to resolve because nerves take the longest to heal *(weeks to months)*. Applying gentle ice packs for the first 5 days to the incision site will help decrease swelling and pain.

- It is also **common to have a sore throat** because you have had endtracheal intubation. **This tenderness should resolve within a few days.**
- It is also common to have difficulty swallowing, hoarseness and/or a sore throat for several weeks after cervical surgery. Over-the-counter throat lozenges are helpful.

If the condition worsens, contact your physician.

Care of incision

- "Keep the incision clean and dry for 10 days. There is no need to change the dressing unless if becomes wet or soiled.
- The dressing can be permanently *removed 7-10 days after surgery*. Leave the steristrips on until they fall off on their own. *DO NOT pull them off*.
- •In the first 10 days, you can shower with a waterproof dressing, but no baths, to avoid getting the incision wet.

It is not uncommon to have a small amount of clear, yellowish drainage, some bruising, redness, and/or swelling around the incision.

- Sutures will dissolve and no additional care is needed after the steri-strips fall off.
- If you have serious swelling, redness, excessive draining, or fevers (see below) please call our office right away.

Fever and infections

• Low-grade fever is common the first few days after surgery, but infections this early are very rare.



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- If you develop a low fever (101) in the first couple days be sure to do deep breathing, get up and move around the house (slowly and carefully) and continue to track your temperature.
- IF you have a fever <u>over 101</u> that persists beyond a couple of days, call the office.

Call our office if ...

- Drainage from the wound increases or changes in color or appearance i.e becomes creamy or cloudy.
- Pain increases dramatically.
- Swelling increases dramatically.
- Have a fever over 101.

Brace

• Wear your brace at all times when you are out of bed, except to use the bathroomunless otherwise instructed by your physician.

Continue to wear your brace until you are told by your physician that it may be discontinued. This will range from 4-12 weeks after surgery.

Neck/ Shoulder/ Arm Pain

• You may have notice *continuing*, or increased shoulder or arm pain, or some pain may return the first 5-7 days following surgery. This is usually cause by <u>inflammation</u> and swelling around the nerves. YOU SHOULD <u>NOT</u> BE

ALARMED as this is **NORMAL** and **COMMON** until the nerves heal. **This should** diminish within 8 weeks after surgery.

Constipation

- **Decreased activity** and the use of **pain medications** following surgery may lead to constipation.
- Drink lots of liquids and eat foods high in fiber.
- If you become constipated, *you can take over the counter stool softeners* such as **Colace** or laxatives such as **Dulcolax**, **Miralax**, and **Metamucil**. *Your pharmacist may also have suggestions for resolving constipation*.
- " Please call our office and speak with a nurse if you have any questions or concerns.

Thrombophlebitis/blood clots

- Blood clots are a potential complication of spine surgery.
- These are common symptoms you should watch for: redness, swelling, pain or tenderness in the calf, groin, or behind the knee.
- If you have ANY of these symptoms DO NOT rub or exercise the affected area, as this may dislodge the clot.
- This may require you to go to the emergency room



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SHORTNESS OF BREATH OR

• <u>IF YOU HAVE</u> <u>CHEST PAINS</u>, GO TO THE

<u>NEAREST EMERGENCY ROOM</u> as this could be a blood clot in your lungs and <u>IS</u> <u>LIFE THREATENING.</u>