

Cervical Surgery Post-Operative Instructions

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*. **SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION AT ONCE.**
- 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 NOT 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.

- 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 over 101 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 bathroom- unless 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 caused by **inflammation and swelling around the nerves**. **YOU SHOULD NOT 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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• **IF YOU HAVE CHEST PAINS, GO TO THE NEAREST EMERGENCY ROOM** as this could be a blood clot in your lungs and **IS LIFE THREATENING.** **SHORTNESS OF BREATH OR**