

POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS FOR ANTERIOR CERVICAL DISCECTOMY & FUSION

The surgical procedure you have undergone is called “Anterior Cervical Discectomy and Fusion.” Your role now is to become an active participant in your recovery. The following instructions are intended to assist you in beginning your recovery.

You must avoid smoking or being around anyone who smokes. Avoid all products that contain Nicotine. Do not take Ibuprofen or anti-inflammatory medications, as these may alter healing of the fusion.

ACTIVITIES-The first week after surgery, you should be up and walking about the house. Activities around the house, such as washing dishes, fixing light meals, and your own personal care are fine. Avoid strenuous activities, such as vacuuming, lifting laundry or grocery bags. Do not lift anything heavier than 20 pounds. After the first week, you may gradually increase your activities, but still avoid heavy lifting, pushing/pulling. Walking is the best way to rebuild strength and stamina. Start SLOWLY and gradually increase the distance a little every week.

CERVICAL COLLAR- If you were placed in a cervical collar after surgery, you will likely need to wear it until your first clinic visit. The collar should be worn at all times except while showering, bathing or eating.

BATHING and INCISION CARE- The incision may be tender to touch or feel numb- this is normal. Keep the incision clean and dry. Be sure to dry the area thoroughly after your shower or bath. The incision will be closed with steri-strips (small strips of tape) on the skin. Try to keep water from directly hitting the incision until the steri-strips come off. These should fall off on their own in about 7-10 days. If they have not come off in 10 days, you can soften them with a warm moist wash cloth and gently pull them off. Do not apply any lotions, ointments or oils on the incision. If you notice any swelling, redness, drainage or heat around the incision, notify the office immediately.

DRIVING –Do NOT drive while taking narcotic medications. You should not drive until you have been released from wearing the collar. You may be a passenger in the car, but take frequent stretch breaks if traveling long distance.

RETURN TO WORK- The decision to return to work will be determined on an individual basis. Many people who have a strenuous job (construction, heavy labor, etc)

may need to be off work for up to 12 weeks, but some return sooner. If you need a work release, please let us know as soon as possible, and not the same day you are planning to return to work.

NUTRITION- Good nutrition is an essential part of healing. You should eat a balanced diet each day, including fruits, vegetables, dairy products and protein. Remember to drink plenty of water. You should supplement your diet with Calcium and Vitamin D. If you have not had a bowel movement within 3 days of surgery, you will need to use a laxative, such as Dulcolax, Correctol or EX-Lax.

MEDICATIONS- You may resume the medications you were taking before surgery, with the general exception of the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications, such as Motrin, Aleve, Advil Naprosyn, Ibuprofen or aspirin. You will receive a prescription for pain medication at discharge from the hospital. The pain medication works best if taken before the pain becomes severe. To reduce stomach upset, always take the medication with food. Begin to wean yourself off the pain medication during the second week after discharge. If you need a refill, please call the office during working hours at least 2 days before your prescription runs out. Do not wait until your bottle is empty to call for a refill. DO NOT drive if you are taking narcotic pain medications.

CALL THE OFFICE:

- If you have severe pain unrelieved by the medications, new numbness or tingling in your neck, arms or hands;
- If you have a fever 100.4 or greater.
- If you notice swelling, redness, heat or drainage from the incision or IV site.
- If you have difficulty swallowing or swelling around the incision

The Spine Center office number is 573-875-9152 from 8:00am to 5:00pm Monday through Friday. After 5:00pm, on weekends, or holidays, please call the hospital operator at 573-875-9000 and ask for either Diane Mueller or the Orthopaedic resident on call.

It has been our pleasure to assist you in your recovery.