

## Comprehensive Neurosurgical Consultants

### CERVICAL FUSION And ARTHROPLASTY Discharge Instructions

**Please Note:** These are guidelines and helpful suggestions for your postoperative recovery period. Everyone progresses at their own pace postoperatively.

- **Medications:**

1. Resume all previous medications unless instructed otherwise.
2. Take the pain medications and/or muscle relaxants prescribed to you as directed. If you feel you are ready to wean down your dosage, please contact our office for weaning instructions. If you feel your pain is not well controlled, do not increase your medication dosage unless directed to do so by your physician or his PA
3. Do not drive while taking pain medication or muscle relaxants.

- **Wound Care:**

1. On day 2 after surgery, you can start changing your bandage every day for one week. You may remove the dressing after one week . The first 48 hours after discharge from the surgery facility please plan to do a sponge/washcloth type of shower. After the first 48 hours please use a waterproof dressing called “opside” when showering for the first week. Typically there are steri-strips over your incision and they will fall off on their own 2-4 weeks postoperatively.
2. Keep the incision area clean and dry for one week. Do not peel off any scabs.
3. In the event that the dressing does get wet, be prepared to change it immediately after getting out of the shower. It is important when you take a shower to have somebody around to assist you. If you drop the soap or shampoo bottle have somebody pick it up for you rather than bending over on your own to pick it up. Please do not take a bath or soak in any water before your first follow-up visit.
4. Steri-strips will fall off on their own or you may remove them after two weeks postoperatively.
5. There may be some numbness around the incision, which is normal and will improve.
6. Please call the office if you notice swelling, redness, heat or drainage around or from your incision, if your incision opens, or if you develop a fever.

- **Activities:**

1. It is very important that fusion patients do not smoke postoperatively. **Do not** use tobacco products for at least six months after your surgery. Nicotine increases the chances of incision infection, pseudoarthrosis (non-union of the fusion), and other complications. Nicotine is contained in all tobacco products (cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, and vapor products). This also includes gum or patches that contain nicotine.
2. For at least **six** weeks you should avoid lifting, pushing, pulling or carrying anything that is greater than 10 lb. Use good body mechanics, avoid reaching for things overhead. Lifting and carrying put extra stress on your healing disc(s), and neck muscles and should therefore be avoided
3. You may feel fatigue for the first several weeks after surgery. This is normal. Taking frequent naps is recommended.

4. During the first couple of weeks, go for frequent short walks only. It is ok to climb stairs. It is important to stand and walk in increasing amounts every day. Please make a determined effort to walk three times a day increasing in intensity.
5. Do not drive for approximately 2 weeks, or while on pain medications. After the first week, you may take short passenger trips. Keep in mind that if you're taking pain medications, they significantly dull your driving reflexes. It is illegal to drive while taking narcotic pain medications. You can resume driving when you're no longer taking pain medications and feel comfortable sitting behind the wheel. We recommend starting with short trips.
6. Your activity restrictions will be reviewed at your first postoperative visit in about 3 weeks.

- **Brace Information:**

Fusion patients may be required to wear a cervical brace for several weeks to months following the surgery. The brace should be worn anytime you are up moving for more than 5 minutes. It is not necessary to wear the brace while in bed, sitting or in the shower. Please see our DME Information Sheet for more brace information.

- **Bone Growth Stimulators:**

In some cases, your doctor may order a bone growth stimulator for you. This device will be provided by an orthotic company called Synergy. The device is intended to facilitate bone growth following a fusion. Please see our DME Information Sheet for more information and call Synergy rep if you have any question about the device.

- **Diet:**

1. Your appetite may be decreased after surgery. You should eat smaller, more frequent meals.
2. You may resume your regular diet as soon as you are able to.
3. **Constipation:** Surgery and pain medication may cause constipation. If you need a laxative, try 1-2 teaspoons of Metamucil and/or a tablespoon of Milk of Magnesia in the evening before bed while taking pain medication. Also, increase your water intake; eat fiber, fresh fruit and vegetables or prunes.
4. **Nausea/Vomiting:** These are also a common side effect of pain medication. If severe, you should contact our office for some treatment options.
5. **Swallowing difficulty:** This is common after cervical surgery and is due to nerve irritation as a result of surgery and typically resolves in 2 to 6 weeks. While you are waiting for your symptoms to improve avoid foods that are difficult to chew and swallow and be careful with medication. Do not allow yourself to become distracted when eating or taking medication to avoid choking.
  - Anterior cervical fusion patients may feel a "fullness" with swallowing. This is normal and will gradually improve. Soft foods and cold liquids may be better tolerated.

## 1. Special Instructions:

1. Please call the office when you get home from the hospital to schedule a 4 week post op appointment at 503-546-3503. We will take x-rays at your second post-operative visits at 3 months. X-rays are done at Providence Radiology on the first floor and you need to arrive 1hr prior to your post op appointment to have them done. They are walk-in based.
2. You will be provided a prescription for a narcotic medication ("pain pill") and a muscle relaxer to take after surgery. Over the counter Extra Strength Tylenol, or an alternative prescription

medication from our office can be used as an alternative to narcotics as your pain gets better. Please keep in mind that our office requires 48 hour notification for all medication refills. Prescriptions for narcotic pain medications have to be picked up in the office.

3. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (Aspirin, Ibuprofen, Advil, Nuprin, Aleve, etc.) should be strictly avoided for at least **six months** after surgery
4. Please contact your pharmacy for medication refills. Refills will only be done during normal business hours. Please give at least 48 hours notice for refill requests. Requests may be faxed to 503-546-3507.