



Princeton Neurological Surgery

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Post-Operative Instructions: Anterior Cervical Discectomy and Fusion

Use these guidelines to help speed your recovery after spinal surgery

Activity

- Although it is encouraged for you to rest for the first 24-48 hours following surgery, be sure to ambulate (walk) with caution at least 15 minutes 3 times daily to help prevent blood clots and respiratory infection. Gradually increase your activity as tolerated.
- No bending, twisting or extending your neck
- No lifting overhead
- No pulling or pushing with your arms
- No lifting greater than 5 pounds
- If you must climb stairs, proceed slowly and cautiously. Hold onto the railing to prevent falling or slipping.
- Make sure you have adequate assistance during this time.
- Remember to wear your cervical collar **at all times** as instructed.
- You may remove your cervical collar for brief periods only for hygiene purposes but you must remain in a neutral position during this time (i.e. facing straight ahead with your neck and back straight).
- You may have been given an additional collar to apply during showering.
- Showering is permitted 24 hours after surgery, however bathing or soaking in a hot tub or spa is **not** permitted until directed by your surgeon.
- Shower with non-perfumed mild soap and warm water.
- Pat the incision area dry after showering; **do not rub.**
- Make sure your skin is clean and dry before putting your cervical collar back on.
- Do not use any creams, ointments, perfumes or powder on or around the incision site.
- Sleep with a pillow under your head elevating 30 degrees; you may sleep on your side
- Deep breathing exercises is strongly advised; especially the first 7 to 10 days after surgery. This helps to prevent post-operative pneumonia
- **Driving is not permitted until** you have been cleared by your neurosurgeon. Two to six weeks is the average time frame but depends on the individual patient and the complexity of your surgery. Narcotics impede judgment, reactions and coordination. The cervical collar

limits your ability to adequately turn your head from side to side

- Smoking and/or any nicotine products are **not permitted**. Nicotine impedes the formation of new blood vessels, a requirement for the fusion to occur.

Incision care and dressings

- Your neurosurgeon often uses Dermabond™ (sterile super glue) on your incision. The adhesive barrier will likely begin to peel off spontaneously after 2 weeks.
- If you have Steri-Strips on your incision, allow them to fall off in the shower

Diet

- Resume a normal well balanced diet as tolerated and as previously recommended by your medical doctor.
- Increase protein and bulk in your diet. Protein helps with tissue repair. Bulk helps to avoid constipation a side effect of narcotics.
- Taking a daily multi-vitamin with calcium and vitamin-D is encouraged.
- Narcotics can cause slowing of gastrointestinal motility and lead to upset stomach and constipation. While taking narcotics drink 6 to 8 glasses of water a day, eat plenty of fruits and fresh vegetables.
- An over the counter stool softener is advised (e.g., Colace or Milk of Magnesia).
- Warm water enemas can be used in conjunction with a stool softener

Medications

- Prescribed medication(s) should be taken only as directed.
- Once you feel you no longer require narcotics to manage your pain, you may take Tylenol.
- Anesthesia, narcotics and inactivity can cause slowing of gastrointestinal motility and lead to upset stomach and constipation. An over the counter stool softener is advised (e.g., Colace or Milk of Magnesia).
- While taking narcotics, drink 6 to 8 glasses of water a day.
- Warm water enemas can be used in conjunction with a stool softener
- **Do not take anti-inflammatory** medications such as aspirin, Ibuprofen, Advil, or Aleve. These medications can impede the bone healing

Symptoms to Report to Your Neurosurgeon

- Call your neurosurgeon immediately if you notice any of the following:
 - Increased redness, drainage, or foul odor from your incision.
 - Shortness of breath, difficulty swallowing, or chest pain.
 - Temperature of **101.5** degrees or above.
 - Any **sudden** pain, numbness, or weakness.

Follow-up appointment

- Once discharged from the hospital, please call our office to schedule your post-operative follow-up appointment. (609) 890-3400
- Post-operative follow up appointments (on average) are as follows:
 - 10 days post discharge from the hospital
 - 6 weeks after initial post-operative appointment
 - 3 months after second follow up appointment

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Practice Administrator and Clinical Manager