



Princeton Neurological Surgery

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Post-Operative Instructions: Spinal Surgery

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 3 times daily to help prevent blood clots and respiratory infection.
- Avoid excessive bending, twisting, and straining.
- Avoid pushing, pulling, or lifting objects > 10 lbs.
- If you have to bend down, try to do so by keeping your back straight to avoid excessive strain on your spine.
- 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 brace or collar as instructed.
- You may remove your brace for brief periods for hygiene purposes but you must remain in a neutral position during this time (i.e. facing straight ahead with your back straight).
- You may have been given an additional brace to apply during showering.
- Showering is permitted, however bathing or soaking in a hot tub or spa is **not** permitted until directed by your surgeon.
- Make sure your skin is clean and dry before putting your brace or collar back on.
- Pat the incision area dry after showering; **do not rub**.
- Do not use any creams, ointments, or powder on the incision site unless instructed to do so by your surgeon.

Incision care and dressings

- Dr. Lipani 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 in your diet. Protein helps with tissue repair.
- 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. An over the counter stool softener is advised (e.g., Colace or Milk of Magnesia).

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.
- 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. An over the counter stool softener is advised (e.g., Colace or Milk of Magnesia).
- ***Do not drive*** until you have been clinically cleared by your surgeon. Two to six weeks is the average time frame but depends on the complexity of your surgery.
- If you had a spinal fusion, ***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 doctor

- Call your surgeon 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.
 - Loss of bladder or bowel control or difficulty voiding.

Follow-up appointment

- Call Dr. Lipani's office the first business day after discharge from the hospital to make your post-operative appointment (usually within 10 days) at 609-890-3400
- Please do not hesitate to contact us with any other questions or concerns.