

Post-Operative Instructions for Anterior Cervical decompression and Fusion

General Instructions:

- 1) You may resume your regular diet as soon as you are able.
- 2) Walking as much as tolerated is encouraged. It is ok to climb stairs.
- 3) No driving for the first two weeks after surgery.
- 4) Call the office for an appointment approximately 14 days from your discharge date from the hospital.
- 5) Take the pain medications and or muscle relaxants prescribed to you as directed.
- 6) You should wear your hard cervical neck collar (Philadelphia collar) at all times when not in bed (the exceptions being showering first two weeks). You will wear the hard collar for the first six weeks and then you will be changed to a soft collar for the six weeks following that.
- 7) **Do Not** use tobacco products for at least six months after your surgery. Nicotine increases the chances of wound infection, pseudoarthrosis (non-union of the fusion), and other complications. Nicotine is contained in all tobacco products (cigarettes, cigars, and chewing tobacco). This also includes gum or patches that contain nicotine.

Things to avoid after surgery:

In the post-operative period for at least **six** weeks you should avoid the following:

- 1) Lifting or carrying anything more than 5 pounds. Avoid reaching for things overhead.

Note: Lifting and carrying put extra stress on your healing disc(s), and neck muscles and should therefore be avoided.

Driving and Passenger Trips: After the first week you may take short passenger trips. No driving during the postoperative period while in a collar. This is primarily because the collar could make it difficult to see properly while driving. In addition, many of you will be on pain medications and these can also significantly dull your driving reflexes.

Dressing and Wound Care: It is important to keep the dressing on your neck dry. Most of the time we use dissolving stitches so there are no stitches to remove. From time to time the ends of the stitches are outside of the skin and covered with steri-strips. At your two-week follow up visit we will check your wound, remove the steri-strips and dressing if necessary, and clip the ends of the “tails” of the suture if necessary.

In the event that the dressing becomes wet it is important to have the supplies available to replace the dressing as soon as possible. Please replace it with a sterile 2X2 or 4x4 type of dressing gauze, which can be purchased at your local drug store. You should also use medical tape, which can also be purchased at your local drug store.

In the event that your wound begins to bother you or if you note any type of fresh fluid on the dressing it is worth looking at the wound. If possible, do not disturb the steri-strips underneath. After the dressing has been removed the wound can be inspected. If there is any concern regarding the wound (IE: significant redness or any discharge from the wound) this should be reported to the office A.S.A.P.

Showering: The first two days after discharge from the hospital we prefer that you do a sponge or washcloth type bath. After the third day you can take a shower if you securely tape plastic over the dressing so that it does not get wet. 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 before your follow-up visit.

Walking: It is important to stand and walk in increasing amounts every day, however we do want you to minimize your lifting and carrying. Please make a determined effort to walk three times a day increasing in intensity so that you are walking up to one mile per day three weeks after surgery.

Prescriptions: You will be provided a prescription for a narcotic medication (“pain pill”) to take after surgery. Over the counter Tylenol Extra Strength, or an alternative prescription medication from our office, can be used as an alternative to narcotics as your pain gets better. A muscle relaxant may be used in some cases. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (Aspirin, Ibuprofen, Advil, Nuprin, Aleve, etc.) should be avoided for **six months** after surgery.

Follow up appointments/ Return to work: After surgery you should schedule an appointment for approximately two weeks after the day you are discharged from the hospital. Often this visit will be with my Physician Assistant (PA) at which time the wound will be checked and we will evaluate your progress with respect to your neck. Returning to work will be discussed at your follow up visit on an individual basis.

Sexual Activity: The first two weeks after your surgery sexual activity is not recommended. Starting the third week you may resume sexual activity if relatively pain free. Do not support your body weight with your arms for the first few weeks.

Stockings: During your hospital stay you will be wearing TED hose type stockings. These are designed to help prevent blood clots in the post-operative period. You should wear these at least 23 hours a day until your follow up visit. You can remove them when you are up walking around or when washing. You should not be lying down without the TED hose on as that is when you are at greatest risk for blood clots.

PATIENT SIGNATURE _____

DATE: _____

