



Dallas Neurosurgical & Spine

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Cervical Fusion Surgery: Post-Operative Instructions

Incision Care

- Usually your stitches are beneath the surface of your skin. They will be absorbed into your body as you heal. Medical glue will be used to close the outside layer of skin.
- You may shower, but no tub baths. Pat incision dry.

Pain

You may still have some pain, numbness or tingling in your neck or arm(s). This should decrease gradually as the nerves heal. An ice pack may be used on the incision to reduce swelling and pain.

Collar Instructions

- You must wear your collar when walking or sleeping.
- You may take it off when sitting, showering or shaving.
- Hold your head straight while the collar is off.
- Do not tilt head back to shampoo or shave.
- Your physician will determine when you are ready to wean out of your collar.

Call Our Office

If you...

- Feel severe pain, weakness or numbness in your leg(s)/arm(s).
- Notice excessive drainage, swelling or increased redness around your incision.
- Have a fever of 101 degrees or greater, which does not resolve with Tylenol.
- Have a new problem controlling your bladder or bowel.
- Have difficulty breathing or trouble swallowing.

Medication

- If you were given a Medrol Dosepak (steroid/anti-inflammatory medication) you may notice a slight increase in the above symptoms, as the Medrol Dosepak decreases. This is due to swelling and irritation around the nerve and will improve as you heal. Complete the full course of Medrol according to instructions in the package. Common side effects of steroids may include, but are not limited to, GI upset, insomnia and anxiety.
- You will be given a prescription for pain medicine when you are discharged from the hospital. Take as directed on the prescription. **Do not drive, operate machinery, or drink alcoholic beverages while taking this medication.**
- You may be given a prescription for muscle relaxants (to reduce spasms or tightness in your back). This medication may make you drowsy. **Do not drive, operate machinery or drink alcoholic beverages while on this medication.**
- Medications will be refilled during normal business hours (8:30 am – 5:00 pm, M-Thrs, 9:30 am – Noon Fri), as the physician on call cannot renew prescriptions.

Activity

First Week:

- No auto travel. Once you get home from the hospital, stay there.
- Walk in your house only.
- Do not move your head until released to do so.

Activity (cont.)

First Week (cont.) :

- You may raise your arms overhead, but no lifting of objects greater than 2 pounds overhead.
- Avoid house and yard work. You may cook, but do not lift more than 5 pounds until released to do so.
- Do not drink from a bottle or can. Use a glass or a straw.
- Sleep on a firm mattress supporting your head on a pillow so it is in a level position.
- Do not sleep with your arms over your head. You may lie on your back or side, but not on your abdomen.
- You may shampoo your hair in the shower only. Do not lean over the sink to shampoo. Hold your head in a neutral position.
- Do not cradle the phone between your cheek and shoulder.
- Take a nap or at least rest in the morning and again in the afternoon.

Second Week:

- Start short walks outside, 1 to 2 blocks, twice a day. You may increase this as tolerated. Do not overdo it!
- Take a nap or at least rest in the morning and again in the afternoon.
- Continue to avoid house and yard work.
- You may ride as a passenger in a car, but do not drive.

Third Week:

- You may start to drive short trips of 20 to 30 minutes. Make certain your seat, mirrors, and restraints are properly adjusted.
- You may resume sexual activity, do not support your body weight with your arms for the first few weeks.
- Increase walking distance as tolerated.
- You may be up and about as tolerated.
- Begin light housework. Do not sweep or vacuum. Stop for frequent breaks. Use good body mechanics.

Fourth Week:

- Gradually increase all activity as tolerated.
- Increase your walking distance to one mile a day, as tolerated.
- If approved by your physician, start isometric exercises as instructed.

Follow-Up Appointment

Your first post-op appointment should be 2 weeks following your discharge from the hospital. Please call early to get a convenient time. You will be scheduled for an x-ray prior to your appointment.

Return to Work

Return to work varies with the type of occupation and will be discussed at your follow-up appointment.