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Cervical Fusion Surgery: Post-Operative Instructions

Incision Care

- Usually your stitches are beneath the surface of your skin.
- Your dressing will be a clear adhesive. It should start to peel off after a week or two.
- You may shower, but no tub baths.
- You must keep your incision(s) dry for 2 days following your surgery.

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 at all times.
- You may take it off to shower and shave.
- 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, but you are usually in the collar for 4 weeks.

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.
- Have a new problem controlling your bladder or bowel.
- Have difficulty breathing or swallowing.

Activity

First Week:

- Limit auto travel. Passenger only. No driving.
- Walk in your house for first couple of days after surgery. Then you may begin to walk outside for short periods 1 to 2 blocks per day. Do not overdo it!
- Do not move your head until released to do so.
- Do not reach for objects above your head.
- 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.
- You may shower, but no tub baths if you have a hip incision. Pat dry, do not rub.
- 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.

Activity (cont.)

Second Week:

- Increase walking distance as tolerated, working up to 1 mile per day.
- Take a nap or at least rest in the morning and again in the afternoon.
- Continue to avoid house and yard work.
- You may begin driving short distances, no more than 30 minutes. Make certain your seat, mirrors, and restraints are properly adjusted

Third Week:

- You may resume sexual activity, do not support your body weight with your arms for the first few weeks.
- Increase walking distance as tolerated, working up to 1 mile per day.
- 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.

Follow-Up Appointment

Your first post-op appointment should be 3 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.