

# Post-Operative Instructions

The following guidelines are recommended after spine surgery to ensure a good recovery. You may be given additional instructions by your surgeon when discharged. If you have any questions or problems please contact our office at (816) 363-2500.

## Activity

You may be up and about to take care of your personal needs but avoid any strenuous activity. Do not lift more than 5 pounds (equivalent to about a gallon of milk). Avoid pushing or pulling.

Going up and down stairs is permissible. Be sure to use the handrails and take one step at a time until comfortable. Take precautions to prevent falls and use assistance if unsure. You may discontinue the TED hose stockings once you are up and walking.

If you had back surgery:

- Avoid bending or twisting at the waist. Bend at your knees (squat) when picking up objects.
- Avoid sitting for longer than 45 minutes at a time.

If you have had neck surgery:

- Avoid repetitive or excessive flexion (looking down) or extension (looking up).
- Limited side-to-side motion as tolerated is permitted.

## Exercise

Walking is the best “exercise” after surgery and you need to walk DAILY. You should not engage in any other exercise until instructed by your physician. Gradually increase the distance you walk and, if weather permits, you may walk outside. You should be able to gradually increase your distance until you can walk about one mile within one month after surgery. Ladies avoid high heels.

## Collar / Brace

You will need the following after surgery: Rigid Cervical Collar Lumbar Brace

You will need to wear the collar/brace after surgery as instructed for: 2 weeks 6 weeks 12 weeks

The collar/brace is to be worn at all times. You should wear it to sleep, unless indicated by your physician. You may not remove the collar to shower. Interchange pads on collar after showering. Let wet pads air dry.

## Incision Care/Bathing

Keep the incision dry for 48 hours after surgery. You do not need to apply any ointment. You may shower after 48 hours. Your dressing is shower proof. Do not take a tub bath or submerge yourself in water for 4 weeks. Inspect incision twice daily. Lift the dressing to examine the incision and then reapply the same dressing. After 7 days or if dressing becomes slopping or unkempt, remove dressing completely. Do not replace. Leave open to air. If incision is still draining, you may lightly cover with gauze to protect clothing. Contact us if drainage persists for more than 2 days or if you have redness or excessive swelling around the incision. It is normal for the incision site to itch, but avoid scratching.

If you have fevers or chills, take your temperature with a thermometer. If you have a temperature of 100.5 or higher, contact our office.

## **Driving**

Do not drive for the first two weeks. You may ride in an automobile for short distances as tolerated.

## **Sexual Intercourse**

Sexual intercourse may be resumed at any time as tolerated. Go slowly and avoid painful positions.

## **Pain Medication**

You will be given a prescription for pain medication when you are discharged from the hospital. You may take the pain medication with a snack or meal if stomach upset occurs. If you need a refill, have your pharmacy fax a refill request to our office at (816)363-8741.

## **Diet**

Eat a healthy, well balanced diet and avoid extra Calories. You may have a decreased appetite after surgery. If you have had neck surgery, you may have temporary difficulty swallowing solid food (such as bread or meat), which should improve in 5 – 7 days.

You may be constipated after your surgery, so increase your intake of fiber (fruits and vegetables) and fluid (unless instructed otherwise). You may use your choice of over-the-counter laxatives (such as Dulcolax, Colace, or Milk of Magnesia). If you do not have a bowel movement, use an over-the-counter enema (i.e. Fleet Enema) as indicated on the bottle. If you are still unable to have a bowel movement, or have nausea, vomiting or abdominal bloating, contact your family doctor for instructions.

## **Smoking**

You should not smoke after surgery, because smoking can decrease the rate of skin and bone healing. Keep in mind, most hospital campuses are smoke-free, so you will not be allowed to go outside to smoke. Contact your primary care physician for smoking cessation options prior to surgery.

## **Office Follow-Up**

You will need a post-operative appointment with your surgeon for an incision check and follow-up.