

# CONNECTICUT NECK & BACK SPECIALISTS LLC

## POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS FOR CERVICAL SPINE SURGERY

### INCISION CARE

- Check the incision twice daily for signs/symptoms of infection: Green/yellow discharge, foul odor, increase in pain at incision site, increased redness, opening of the incision, flu-like symptoms, or a temperature above 101.5 degrees.
- Your bandages will most likely be removed before you leave the hospital. If not, they should be removed 24 to 36 hours after surgery.
  - If you have steri-strips on, leave them on after surgery; these will fall off on their own. Do not pull them off. If they fall off early, don't worry. Re-absorbable sutures are beneath the skin and will continue to support the incision while it heals.
  - If you have staples or sutures, please schedule a post-op appointment with your doctor to have these removed approximately two weeks after surgery.
- Keep your incision covered with a dressing until stitches or staples have been removed.
- Do not put anything on your incision.
- Expect to have minimal swelling at the incision site.
- Despite great care, any incision can become infected. If you notice your wound becoming increasingly red, swollen, hot, or draining, please call your physician immediately.
- Take medications only as directed by your doctor.
- If you have had a fusion, taking acetaminophen (Tylenol) is acceptable, but avoid ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) or naproxen (Aleve) for three months.
- Use a muscle relaxant to prevent muscle spasms or severe muscle tightness. Please call your doctor if you are experiencing these symptoms; they may be able to prescribe something to help you.
- With the use of narcotic pain medications, simple constipation is common. Increasing your intake of fiber with a daily supplement such as Metamucil is often helpful. Avoid extended use of stimulant laxatives.

*Please note: Medications are not refilled after 4:30pm, weekends, or holidays.*

### PAIN MANAGEMENT

- You will get a prescription for pain medications before you are discharged from the hospital. Try to wean yourself from the narcotics as soon as tolerable.
- Extra strength Tylenol may also help the pain and cause fewer side effects.
- We will usually wean pain medication a few weeks after surgery. If you require pain management that is complex, high doses of narcotics, or longer periods of narcotic use, it may be necessary to enroll the help of a pain specialist as we are not registered as a pain management center.

Connecticut Neck and Back Specialists, LLC  
20 Germantown Road  
Danbury, CT 06810  
Tel: (203)744-9700 Fax (203)744-9701

## **ACTIVITY**

- Avoid pushing/ pulling and lifting anything over 10 lbs until cleared by your doctor. If you return to a sedentary job, you must abide by these restrictions. A letter can be faxed from our office stating these restrictions.
- Activity, especially walking around your home, is encouraged. Try to do so at least 4 times daily.
- Do not do heavy housework, such as bed making, vacuuming or laundry.
- If using stairs is necessary, go slowly and use the handrail.
- No special exercises are necessary.

## **DIET**

- You can eat a regular diet, though you may find that softer foods or thick liquids are easier to swallow initially after surgery. Swallowing should become progressively easier over the ensuing few days.

## **GENERAL INFO**

- Spine fusion patients cannot smoke for 6 months after surgery. You must also avoid nicotine products (smokeless tobacco, gum and patches) and avoid exposure to smoke from other smokers.
- If directed by your doctor, wear your collar at all times except for shaving or bathing. When you collar is off, keep your head in the same position as if the collar was on. At your first post-operative visit, you will be given further instructions.
- Do not drive until after we have seen you at your first post-op visit, unless otherwise approved by your physician. Riding in the car is acceptable, but long car rides (2 hrs.) are discouraged.
- An increased intake of water, 6 to 8 glasses per day, will help clear your body of anesthetics and excess pain medication.
- X-rays may be taken at regular intervals to assess the status of your recovery.
- Physical therapy, if needed, will be initiated with your doctor at your post-op checkup.

## **CALL YOUR DOCTOR IF YOU:**

- Have drainage and/or odor from your wound.
- Have increased redness/swelling at the incision site, or unexplained increasing incisional pain not relieved by bed rest.
- Have fever greater than 101 with sweats or chills.
- Have new or unfamiliar pain or weakness in the arms or legs.
- Have difficulty with urination or bowel movements.