



POSTERIOR CERVICAL FUSION

PATIENT EDUCATION FORM

MEDICATIONS:

- You will be prescribed pain medication such as Norco, Percocet, or Oxycodone, and possibly a muscle relaxant. Since you had a fusion surgery, **AVOID** the use of anti-inflammatory medications such as Advil, ibuprofen, Aleve, Motrin, etc. These drugs can inhibit healing and slow the fusion process.
- After the first or second week you may notice you do not need to take the medication as often as prescribed. You can then begin to take your pain medication as needed. You may **NOT** take them more often than ordered. If you feel your pain is not well controlled contact our office.
- If you are taking acetaminophen (Tylenol) in addition to the prescribed medication it is **important to NOT exceed four grams (4000 milligrams) per day**. The base of the pain medication is often acetaminophen (Tylenol).
- A common side effect of pain medication is constipation. It is important to eat a well-balanced diet and drink plenty of water. Most likely you will need to take an over-the-counter stool softener while you are taking the pain medication.
- **DO NOT use any tobacco or nicotine containing products**. This includes nicotine patches. These products delay the fusion process and are not good for overall healing after surgery.

ACTIVITY:

- ***The most important thing you can do to aid recovery is to be up and moving around.*** Walk each day and steadily increase the amount of walking you do. Your muscles will become stiff and sore if you are not up and walking. Immobility also leads to an increased risk of blood clots, particularly after surgery.
- Avoid running or walking on steep inclines.
- Avoid bending, twisting, or rotating your neck at any time, especially during the limited times without the collar defined below. If you need to bend down, bend at the knees, and not at the waist. Avoid lifting or reaching above your head.
- **DO NOT LIFT** anything heavier than **5 pounds** until your first postoperative visit.
- You may resume sexual activity when you feel ready.
- Your surgeon will discuss your return to work at your follow-up appointment if earlier arrangements have not been made.
- If you are prescribed a cervical collar, it is meant to support your neck during the healing process. It should be worn when you are up and moving. It may be left off for short periods of time only while you shower, eat, or for men to shave. You may or may not want to wear the collar when you are sleeping. It may be necessary to wear the cervical collar for up to three months postoperatively.
- You **MAY NOT DRIVE** with your cervical collar. Your surgeon will discuss when you may return to driving at your follow-up appointment. Remember **NO DRIVING** immediately after taking your pain medication or muscle relaxant.

INCISION:

- You may remove the outer dressing after being home for **24 hours**. The outer dressing is gauze and tape and may be removed but leave the adhesive strips in place. If you are wearing a collar, you may apply dry gauze and tape daily until your follow-up appointment.

- Your incision will be closed with sutures or staples. Many sutures do not need to be removed because they are absorbed by the body. If you have staples or removable sutures, these will be taken out at your first follow-up appointment in **two to three weeks**.
- **Keep your incision clean and dry at all times.** You may shower but must cover the adhesive strips by water-sealing your incision. This can be done by covering the incision with Glad Press-N-Seal™ during your shower and removing it after your shower. When showering keep your incision away from the stream of water. No bathing or soaking of incision. No swimming in hot tubs, pools, lakes, oceans, etc.
- Do not put ointments or creams on your incision.
- As your incision heals it may itch but try to avoid scratching it.
- Often times you may get an area of swelling directly under your incision. As long as there is no redness, drainage, or tenderness the swelling will typically resolve. Watch the area closely for changes.
- Avoid swimming pools or hot tubs until cleared by your surgeon.

SCHEDULED FOLLOW UP:

- Your next follow-up visit will be **two to three weeks** following your surgery for wound evaluation. Additional follow-up will be scheduled at that time.
- **We want to evaluate you in clinic if you have any signs or symptoms of an infection.** This includes excess draining, foul odor, increased pain at the incision site, increased redness, opening of the incision, or fever greater than 101.5. Contact the clinic during regular office hours (Monday through Thursday, 8am-4pm, Friday 8am-3pm) at (314) 266-2066. After hours contact the exchange at (314) 266-2066.

REASONS TO CONTACT YOUR SPINE SURGEON:

- Pain not controlled with pain medications
- Temperature greater than 101.5
- Increased redness, tenderness, opening of your incision, any drainage, or foul odor from your incision
- Leg swelling or calf tenderness
- Increased numbness or tingling in an extremity
- Any questions or concerns you may have