

Discharge Instructions

Activity

- Arrange your household to keep the items you need within reach.
- Remove electrical cords, throw rugs, and anything else that may cause you to fall.
- Use a walker or handrails until your balance, flexibility, and strength improve. And remember to ask for help from others when you need it.
- Free up your hands so that you can use them to keep balance.
- Don't bend or twist at the waist, or raise your hands over your head for the first 2 weeks after your surgery.
- Don't lift anything heavier than 15 pounds for the first 2 weeks after surgery.
- Take frequent short walks throughout the day. Get up and walk for at least 5-10 minutes every hour during the day. Short, frequent walks are key to reducing pain and are the key to your recovery.
- Don't drive until your doctor says it is okay to do so, and **DO NOT DRIVE** while you are taking opioid pain medications.
- Nap if you are tired, but don't stay in bed all day.
- Use chairs with arms. The arms make it easier for you to stand up and sit down.
- Use nonslip bath mats, grab bars, an elevated toilet seat, and a shower chair in your bathroom if needed.

Incision Care

- Change the dressing daily but leave the steri-strips on the incision; they will eventually fall off on their own. Do not clean the incision with anything (alcohol or peroxide). Replace the bandage with an island dressing or gauze and paper tape. Continue to cover the incision until the drainage has stopped for a 24hr period; then it may be left open to air.
- Check your incision daily for redness, tenderness, and drainage. Some drainage is normal and can vary in amount. It may start out red/pink/clear then turn a brownish color; this indicates healing and dried blood nearing the end of the drainage.
- Don't soak your wound in water (no hot tubs, bathtubs, swimming pools) for 6 weeks following surgery.
- OK to shower after a 24 hour period of no incision drainage (usually 2-3 days post-op). Carefully let water rinse over incision, do not scrub. Gently pat the incision dry. Do not rub it. Do not apply creams or lotions. And if you feel unsteady while standing to shower, use a shower stool or chair.

Follow-Up

- Keep all appointments for follow up after surgery; typically 14-21 days post-op, 6 weeks post-op, and 12 weeks post-op, if needed.
- Make appointments for physical therapy as instructed by your doctor, which usually begins at 4-6 weeks post-op.

Medications

- Take all medications as directed.
- Do not take Aspirin containing products or blood thinners for 7 days following surgery, unless otherwise instructed.
- Don't take nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medicine (NSAIDs), such as Ibuprofen, Aleve, or Advil for 3 months following a fusion surgery, or until directed by your surgeon. They may delay or prevent proper fusion of the spine.
- May take Tylenol (acetaminophen) with Tramadol only, DO NOT take Tylenol while taking Norco/Perocet. **DO NOT** exceed more than 1,000mg of Tylenol **FROM ALL SOURCES** in a 6 hour period, or more than 4,000mg in 24 hours.
- Take Colace, a stool softener, twice daily to reduce constipation while taking pain medications.
- If constipation persists, try Milk of Magnesia or Miralax as directed on the package.
- If no relief with the above recommendations try Magnesium Citrate as directed. This can be done twice, and if no relief contact your primary care physician.

When to seek medical attention

- Any signs and symptoms of infection including fever of 101.5°F or higher.
- Opening of the incision.
- A severe headache.
- New/increased pain, weakness, or numbness in your limbs.
- Loss of movement in one or both limb(s).

Call 911 right away if you have any of the following

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Trouble controlling your bowels or bladder
- If you suspect a urinary tract infection, contact your primary care provider

If you smoke, get help to stop. This will be one of the most important things you can do to help you recover from surgery.

If you have any questions please contact our office at 815-398-9491