

Cervical Total Disc Replacement Postoperative Instructions

Wound Care

- Keep incision area dry and clean. Do not put any ointments or antibiotic solutions on the incision. Let the steri-strips fall off by themselves. You should remove them after two weeks. If you notice **any drainage**, redness, swelling or increased pain at the incision site, call the office immediately. You may use an ice pack for 7 days after surgery to help with incisional discomfort as needed.
- You may shower immediately after your surgery, as long as 1) the incision is still protected with a waterproof dressing, and 2) you do not have a drain in place. Remove your dressing after 3 days. Do not take a bath or get into a pool for two weeks.
- For the best cosmetic result, keep your incision away from direct sunlight and tanning booths until it fades completely to flesh tone. Otherwise, there is a risk of permanent discoloration. You may use vitamin E lotion to massage the incision after 6 weeks.
- You will probably have pain or difficulty with swallowing for the first week after your surgery, particularly with bread and meat. Softer foods, smaller bites, and lots of liquids are helpful in the early phases of healing. You may minimize these difficulties with swallowing by performing the throat exercises three times daily prior to your surgery.
- **If you find that you are having extreme difficulty swallowing, along with voice changes, this may be serious and potentially life-threatening, so you should contact your doctor as soon as possible.**

Activities and Restrictions

- Sleep upright in either a bed or recliner for the first 3 nights after surgery. Keeping your neck above your heart decreases throat swelling and improves swallowing. Some stiffness or ache in the back of your neck is normal immediately after neck surgery, but it usually improves quickly.
- There are no restrictions regarding activities, lifting or sports (within reason; avoid dangerous activities). Return to all activities as tolerated.
- No driving motor vehicles when taking strong narcotic pain medication. You may drive when you can comfortably turn your head to observe traffic and when your judgment is not impaired by pain medication.

Medications

- For the next 2 years, you should take antibiotics prior to any dental work or invasive medical procedure. If possible, avoid dental procedures for 6 weeks after surgery.
- Do not take anti-inflammatory medication (e.g., ibuprofen, naproxen) or blood thinning medication (e.g., Coumadin, Plavix, Lovenox, Fragmin) for 1 week before and 1 week after surgery, unless specifically discussed with your surgeon.

Questions and Emergencies

Call 815-398-9491 during business hours for questions and emergencies (Monday-Thursday 8 A.M. to 4 P.M., Friday 8 A.M. to noon). **Medication refills will only be authorized during business hours.** Please specify if you calling for an emergency and you will be connected with the spine nurse. All emergencies are reported to the physician immediately.

After business hours, you may call 815-398-9491 and an the answering service will contact your physician. If he is out of town or if it is the weekend, another physician or physician's assistant will be available.