



715-843-1000

NECK SURGERY POST OP INSTRUCTIONS

We are pleased that you have chosen us to provide your neurosurgery care. Taking care of yourself after surgery is a key part of your recovery. This information will assist you with your post-operative care.

ACTIVITY

- 1) **Walking:** In addition to your usual activities, please make a point of taking a walk 3 times a day- once in the morning, once in the afternoon, and once in the evening. Start by walking in your home, and then progress to walking outside, or in a mall, store, or other public place. Walking is good for your circulation as well as your lungs and heart. Use your judgment as to how far to walk, and increase your distances gradually.
- 2) **Lifting:** Please avoid lifting more than 8 pounds until you are seen for follow-up in our clinic, or instructed otherwise by us. Eight pounds is roughly the weight of a plastic gallon of milk.
- 3) **Bending, and twisting:** Until you are seen for post-operative follow up in our clinic, please avoid any activities that require significant or repetitive bending, lifting or twisting.
- 4) **Sitting:** Please avoid prolonged sitting. For example, if you are sitting to watch television, consider getting up every 20 to 30 minutes to stretch your legs. And on the way home from the hospital, consider making a rest stop to stretch your legs, particularly if you live more than an hour or so from the hospital.
- 5) **Driving:** We do not advise driving until all pain medication has been stopped and a vehicle can be safely controlled. A neck brace or collar can also impair your ability to turn your head to look around you, so if you feel you are unsafe to drive with the brace or collar on, have someone else drive for you. You need to use your best judgment in this regard.

WOUND CARE

Your dressing should be changed once daily. The dressing can be a gauze pad applied to the wound and held in place with tape. A family member or friend may need to help. You will be provided with some gauze and tape at the time of discharge. When you run out, these can be obtained at a drugstore.

The incision site has a glue covering it which will allow you to shower after surgery. Prior to showering, remove the dressing. It is okay for the incision to get wet during showering. After showering, blot the incision dry and place a new dry dressing over the incision site. Do not submerge the wound under water (no hot tubs, no baths)

A few small spots of blood on the dressing are normal after surgery. In the unlikely event there is more significant bleeding, apply direct manual pressure to the wound. Please call us or seek medical attention for any bleeding that is enough to soak a dressing.

Your wound may have been closed with skin staples, or closed with an absorbable suture under the skin. The ends of the absorbable suture may protrude from the skin at the ends of the incision. Please do not remove these suture ends. Your wound may also have small tape-like bandages called Steri Strips, do not remove these. However, if the Steri Strips loosen and fall off, do not be alarmed.

We will remove the staples or the ends of the absorbable sutures when we see you for follow-up in our clinic.

COLLARS AND BRACES

Depending upon your individual circumstances, you may be prescribed a collar or a brace for your neck. If you are prescribed the collar or brace for neck, ask us which of the instructions below you should follow

No Collar:

Soft Collars:

If you are prescribed a soft collar, wear this only as needed for neck comfort. You do not need to wear it at night unless you find it helpful to do so, and you do not need to wear it in the shower.

Hard collars:

For comfort use only: If you are prescribed a hard collar we may instruct you to use this for comfort use only. If that is the case, wear the collar when you find it helps with neck pain or discomfort, but you can take it off when you feel you do not need it. You do not need to wear the collar at night, or in the shower, unless you find it helpful to do so.

For additional stability:

You may be prescribed a hard collar, to provide additional stability to your neck. You should then wear the collar at all times, except for hygiene. To clean or shave your neck and face, remove front half of the collar but leave the back on. To clean the back of your neck, leave the front half of the collar on while you take the back half off. You should wear the collar in the shower as well. If you have a pink hard cervical brace, it is water repellent and can be worn in the shower. After your shower, remove half the brace at a time and blot it dry. If you have a gray cervical brace with foam inserts or pads, you will be provided with 2 sets of inserts or pads. Wear your brace in the shower, then remove the wet inserts or pads and replace them with the dry inserts or pads. Allow the wet inserts or pads to dry before re-using. Unless otherwise advised, wear your brace at night while sleeping.

PAIN MANAGEMENT

Some incision discomfort or pain may be expected after surgery. In order to minimize your discomfort, you will be given a prescription for a pain medicine and/or another medicine to be taken for painful muscle spasms.

Use your pain medication as directed. Pain medication dosing should be decreased as the pains improve.

Use the muscle spasm medication as directed. It can help prevent sudden painful tightening of the muscles. It tends to work best if taken for several consecutive doses. The medications can be discontinued when the spasms no longer occur.

The pain of a surgical incision, like all injuries, can benefit from ice application. Ice should be applied to the affected area 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off. Remember you can freeze your skin just like you can burn it so place a barrier such as a light t-shirt or a pillowcase between the ice and your skin.

Contact us during regular business hours 3-4 days before you run out of your medication. This gives us adequate time to generate, electronically transmit, and/or mail the prescription. Prescriptions that are required to be hand written can be picked up at our office during normal business hours or mailed to you. Prescription requests made on a Friday will not be available until the following week.

FOLLOW-UP CARE

We will generally make an appointment to see you in our clinic 10- to 14 days after your surgery. If you leave the hospital without a follow up appointment please call our office to make an appointment.

Call with questions, concerns or changes in your condition. We would much rather know how you are doing, and try to answer your questions or concerns, rather than have you be uncertain or worried about how you are doing.

If you experience emergency or urgent conditions while you are at home, call 911. Otherwise, please contact us at 715-843-1000. Our office hours are Monday-Friday 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. After hours, the contact number above will automatically connect to our paging service. Generally one of our physicians and/or physician assistants is on call for our practice. On rare occasions another physician may be providing coverage for our patients.

We hope this information is helpful, and thank you once again for allowing us to provide your surgical care.