



2800 Westhill Drive Suite 200
Wausau Wisconsin 54401
715-843-1000

SPINE 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.

BACK BRACE

No Brace:

Soft corset type brace:

If you have been provided with a cloth-type corset with Velcro fasteners, please bring this with you to the hospital for use after surgery. We will want you to wear this whenever you are up and about after surgery. You can get up at night to go the bathroom without putting it on, but otherwise should wear it whenever you are up and about. You can put on and take off the corset while you are sitting on the side of your bed. You do not need to wear it at night in bed. If you have a soft lumbar corset, you do not need to wear this in the shower.

Hard plastic brace:

If you have been provided with a hard plastic brace, we may instruct you to put this on and take it off only while you are laying down, and to wear at all times when you're up. We may ask you to shower with the hard plastic back brace on. After your shower, you can lay down while the back brace dries, and then put it on again. Showering at night before bed may be best, as the back brace can be left off to dry overnight while you are laying flat.

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 a 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 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 like 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, 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 5:30 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.