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DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS

For Patients Who Have Undergone

Anterior Cervical Spine Fusion

Please contact our office at (336) 333-6306 to schedule an appointment 4 weeks from the date of your surgery (if not already scheduled).

- 1. Wound Care/Sutures.** The surgical dressing will be removed before discharge from the hospital. Do not apply creams and/or cleansers to the incision. There will be dermabond glue on your skin sealing the incision. This will peel off with time.
- 2. Showers.** You may begin showering as soon as you feel safe in doing so. It is alright to get the incision wet in the shower. However, do not submerge the incision under water.
- 3. Incisional Swelling.** Swelling around the incision after surgery is normal. You may even notice a slight increase in swelling after activities. This will dissipate in time; however, please report any significant swelling, redness, fever, drainage, or intractable pain!
- 4. The Bone Graft Donor Site** (if applicable) can be a source of pain and discomfort. You may apply a cold pack over the bone graft site intermittently. These symptoms will dissipate over a period of time and may even linger more than 2-3 months after surgery.
- 5. Post-Operative Blues.** So you're feeling better, and the discomfort you're in now is nothing compared to what you endured before surgery ... or perhaps you feel quite the opposite. Many patients have verbalized frustration at not being able to resume normal activities – for example, driving, going back to work or participating in simple activities of daily living. Having to limit and curtail your activities, along with pain and discomfort, can leave you with the impression that you will never get better. There is a light at the end of the tunnel! Remember that your body needs to recover from major surgery. How you take care of yourself in the post-operative period will have direct bearing on the ultimate result. This is the time to take care of yourself. Rest, eat a well-balanced diet rich in protein, walk every day if possible, take a more positive attitude and feel good about yourself. It takes a great deal of courage and determination to undergo what you have been through.
- 6. Post-Operative Activities.** Once you are home, the aerobic exercise permitted is walking. We strongly encourage this, and it should be done in a progressive manner as tolerated, in a safe environment, and on flat surfaces. Avoid any lifting greater than 5 pounds. Collar should be worn at all times.

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7. First Post-Operative Examination. Upon your discharge from the hospital, please contact our office at (336) 333-6306 to schedule an appointment 4 weeks from the date of your surgery. At this appointment, sutures will be clipped (if necessary), your wound will be checked, and x-rays will be taken. Sutures for anterior cervical fusions are absorbable and do not need to be removed. You will be seen by a physician assistant. If you have any specific questions regarding your progress, it is a good idea to make a list and address these questions when you come in for this visit.

8. Cervical Collars. It may be necessary for you to wear a soft collar for a period of 6 weeks. After 6 weeks, you will likely discontinue wearing the collar.

9. Things to Avoid.

- Prolonged standing in one place and prolonged sitting are not recommended as this may cause increased soreness and/or stiffness. If you need to sit for a prolonged period of time, it would be wise for you to get up intermittently, walk around and stretch your legs.
- Do not lift objects over 5 pounds.
- Avoid repetitive overhead activities.
- Minimize the amount of time spent in an automobile.
- If an activity provokes any discomfort, don't do it!!

10. Vitamin Supplements. It is important that you take vitamin supplements post-operatively while your fusion is healing. We recommend that you take the following, with plenty of water: at least one Multi-Vitamin daily; 400 units twice daily of Vitamin D; and 500 mg twice daily of Calcium Citrate. You can obtain all of these at your local pharmacy, over-the-counter.

A successful post-operative recuperation is, in part, dependent on your adhering to these instructions. Thank you for your cooperation.