



Discharge Instructions After Cervical Spine Surgery

Medication for pain

A moderate amount of pain is normal after surgery. Take your pain medications as prescribed by Dr. Delahunt. If you need a refill, call Dr. Delahunt's office at least 3 days before you run out of the medicine.

- Do not operate machinery or drink alcohol while using narcotic pain medications.
- Do not take aspirin or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medication, such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, Aleve).
- Some patients get muscle spasms. To lessen the spasm, apply an ice compress for 20 minutes followed by a heat compress for 20 minutes, then 20 minutes of no compress.
- Sometimes an additional muscle relaxer is needed. Call your Dr. Delahunt's office if you have unrelieved pain.

Diet

You may have some trouble swallowing solid foods at first. Start with softer foods and advance to regular food as you are able.

Pain medications can cause constipation. Remember to drink 6 to 8 glasses of water a day. Increase fruits, vegetables and fiber. If this does not help, your pharmacist can recommend a laxative.

Elastic hose/TED stockings

Once you are walking, elastic hose/TED stockings may be removed.

Exercise/therapy

If after surgery the physical therapist or occupational therapist gave you exercises, continue to do the exercise program after follow-up appointment.

Incision care

- It is normal to have a slightly red, swollen incision. A small amount of drainage may be present.
- If you have a dressing, keep it dry. You may remove your dressing when there is no drainage.
- Do not apply lotions, ointments or creams to your incision.
- Your incision is closed with steri-strips (small pieces of tape over the incision). You may remove them 7 to 10 days after surgery if they have not fallen off yet.
- You may shower the second day after surgery and get incision wet. Pat dry. No dressing is needed.
- No tub baths or soaking in a hot tub until Dr. Delahunt says it is OK.

Activity

- Avoid lifting more than 10 pounds. Use comfort as your guide for any other activity. If it hurts, don't do it.
- Walk at least 10 minutes a day (no running). You may walk stairs.
- Do not drive until told to do so by Dr. Delahunt. You may be a passenger.
- Do not drive when taking narcotics.

You will be given a soft cervical collar at discharge and wear as needed.

Sleep

Do not sleep on your stomach. You may sleep on your back or side with a small pillow under your head.

Sexual activity

Sexual activity is not harmful after surgery if you avoid strain or twisting to the neck and back. You should be the partner on the bottom.

Do not smoke

Smoking has been found to decrease blood flow and healing. If you smoke, stop. The nurses can give you information on quitting if you are interested.

Call Dr. Delahunt's office if you have any of these symptoms:

- Your incision becomes red, swollen or warm.
- The drainage from the incision changes from spotty to continuous.
- The drainage from the incision is thick or foul smelling.
- You have a fever of 101° F or higher.
- You are unable to empty your bladder.
- The pain gets progressively worse, a new pain develops, or your pain is not controlled by pain medication.
- Your leg is swollen and painful.

**If you feel you have an emergency,
go to the emergency room.**

Call 911 if you have:

- **Chest pain**
- **Shortness of breath**
- **Any other life-threatening condition**