

# Cervical

## *Discharge Instructions for Cervical Fusion Patients*

These instructions are designed to assist you with any problems or questions that you might have after your discharge from the hospital. If you do not understand any of the following information or have any other questions or problems, please call our office at 256-327-7463 (256-32 SPINE) or Toll Free 1-877-957-7463 (1-877-95 SPINE)

**Follow-Up Visits:** Patients are generally scheduled for post-op visits approximately 7-10 days after surgery. Please call our office to schedule your post-op appointment.

**Wound Care:** When you arrive home, you may remove the surgical dressing if your wound is dry. If there is surgical tape across the wound, leave the tape in place and allow this to come off on its own. As the tape begins to come off, you may remove it. If your wound is not dry and there is drainage from a small area, keep this portion covered with a gauze pad. You may clean this wound with peroxide three times a day if some drainage is noted.

**Signs and Symptoms of Wound Infection:** Observe your wound daily for any signs of possible infection. Look for redness, swelling, and tenderness around the incision. Any increased drainage or change in the color or odor of any previous drainage is also of some concern. If you observe any of these symptoms or begin to run a fever (temperature greater than 102° degrees), please call our office immediately.

**Showers and Bathing:** If your wound is dry, you may take a shower after the third day following surgery. If you have continued drainage, sponge bathing is recommended. We recommend avoidance of a tub bath, whirlpool, or jacuzzi for a period of up to ten days following surgery. If you have a bone graft taken, this could allow softening of the wound and some water may leak under the skin, possibly contributing to an infection. If you will be home alone, have a shower stool available in case you become tired or lightheaded.

**Bracing:** If a brace was provided while in the hospital, this should be worn at all times for a six week period. It may be removed while sitting in a chair for skin care.

### **Activities:**

1. The first six weeks following discharge is a time for rest with intermittent walking. Avoid bending, lifting or any strenuous activity. Do not reach above the level of the shoulders and avoid any activities that may cause you to reach above the level of your shoulders.
2. Riding in the car is allowed as tolerated from a comfort standpoint.
3. Sexual activity is permitted to the comfort level of the individual.

### **General Information:**

1. Surgery on the cervical spine often requires mobilization of the esophagus and trachea. It is not uncommon to have difficulty swallowing after this procedure for three to six weeks. During this period, if difficulty swallowing is noted, a soft diet is recommended.
2. It is not uncommon, after cervical spine surgery, to have some residual stiffness and soreness in the neck and in the upper shoulder area.
3. If you notice any significant increase in weakness after surgery, please contact us immediately.
4. If you notice any signs of infection or have any concerns about an infection, please contact us immediately.
5. If you run out of medicine before your first post-op visit, you may call the office, and we will refill your medication. This must be done during office hours, Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Unfortunately, we cannot refill medication after 5 p.m. on weekdays, weekends or holidays.

9/14



*Toll Free Spine Care Hotline:*

1.877.957.7463 (1.877.95 SPINE)