



Posterior Cervical Fusion Post-operative Instructions

Successful surgery depends not only on the success of the procedure, but also on your cooperation and compliance during the post-operative period. To assist you in this process, below are instructions and guidelines to follow during your recovery period.

Wound

- There are typically dissolving sutures in the incision that do not need to be removed. Your incision will be assessed for these at your post-operative office visit.
- Begin changing your dressing daily after hospital discharge. You may shower but you need to cover the incision with a plastic covering to keep it dry. **Do not swim or soak in water for 6 weeks.**
- The small paper tapes on your incision will be removed in the office at your post-op visit or will be allowed to fall off themselves.
- Do not put creams or ointments on the wound for at least 3 weeks.
- If you had bone harvested for a graft, there may be swelling and numbness at the site. These are normal. Use ice packs to help the swelling. The numbness will gradually fade over several months. There could be some minor residual numbness.

Collar/DME

- You will be placed in a collar after surgery. **This is to be worn at all times** for 8 weeks. The length of time may be extended if your bones are not healing well.
- You will be given a second collar to wear in the shower.
- If you are at high risk for poor bone healing, you may be placed in a bone growth stimulator. You need to wear this daily as directed for 6 months.

Pain Relief

- Our office will provide you with prescription pain medication to help with your surgical pain. You should use these medications only as directed and only if needed.

- As your incision heals, we would expect you to begin weaning from prescription medications. This should begin about 3-4 weeks after surgery.
- If you are prescribed antibiotics after surgery, please finish them in their entirety.
- You will need to avoid anti-inflammatory medications for 1 week before and 3 months following surgery. Use of these medications could delay the healing of your fusion.
- You will need to avoid blood thinners (Aspirin, Coumadin, Lovenox, Plavix) for 1 week prior to surgery. In most cases, you may restart them (at the doctor's discretion) 4 days after surgery or 4 days after drains are removed.
- **Remember, ABSOLUTELY NO MEDICATION REFILLS WILL BE PROCESSED ON THE WEEKEND.** Please plan accordingly. Contact your pharmacy to process all refill requests.
- Your surgery required the use of spinal instrumentation. You should notify your dentist of this prior to having dental work/cleaning. It is advised that you be pre-medicated with antibiotics prior to these procedures for the first 2 years following your surgery. The antibiotics should be given to you by your dentist.

Exercise/Activity

- Avoid riding in a car for 2 weeks – unless medically necessary.
- Wear the white compression stockings given to you at the hospital for 2 weeks following surgery. You can take them off when walking but should wear them at night and when inactive for prolonged periods.
- The best exercise is walking. Small amounts done frequently are best. Try to set a goal of one mile per day total. It is best to stay mobile.
- Follow the instructions given to you by the physical therapist at the hospital prior to discharge.
- Repetitive activities using your arms may aggravate muscle spasms around your neck and upper back. Modify your activity with this in mind.
- Do not lift above your head for the first 8 weeks after surgery. It is okay to raise your arms to comb and wash your hair.
- Do not lift more than 5-10 lbs for the first 8 weeks after surgery. Physical therapy will begin 8 weeks after surgery and will assist you in increasing your activities. You will go 3 x a week for 4 weeks.
- Avoid stairs while you are wearing your collar– they are a fall hazard.
- **DO NOT SMOKE.** This increases the chance that your bone will not heal properly. See your primary care physician if you need assistance to quit smoking.

Driving

- You are not allowed to drive for approximately 9 weeks after surgery. The first 8 weeks you will be restricted by the collar. You will need to be cleared to come out of the collar and have started physical therapy prior to being allowed to drive.
- It is the policy of this office to advise you not to drive while under the influence of pain medications.

Return to Work

- If you can work from home, you can begin doing light desk/phone work as tolerated about 2-3 weeks after surgery.
- If you have to report to the office to perform your job, you will be able to do this at 4 weeks after surgery. Someone will need to drive you. You will be restricted to light desk/phone type work.
- If your job requires heavy physical activity, you will be unable to perform this type of work for at least 12 weeks after surgery.

Follow-up

- You have a follow-up scheduled with one of our clinical staff in our Plano office on _____ . Please arrive at least 10 minutes early to check in and get your x-rays done. Please expect to have x-rays done at each scheduled follow-up appointment.

What to Watch For

- Please contact our office for any of the following:
Oral temperature greater than 100.5 ° F
Excessive redness, swelling, or drainage at the incision site
New, increasing pain/numbness/weakness in your arms/legs
Clear liquid draining from the wound
Headaches or dizziness that occurs when upright that is better with lying down
- For general medical problems such as sore throat, cough, nasal drainage, etc., please contact your primary care physician. You should also contact your primary care physician regarding in questions about your routine medications not prescribed by this office.
- For medical emergencies, please call 911 or report to the nearest emergency room.



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Date of Surgery: _____ Scheduled Surgery Time: _____ Hospital Arrival Time: _____ No food or drink after midnight day prior to surgery.

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