



## ANTERIOR CERVICAL DISCECTOMY AND 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. Our staff is here to assist all your post-operative needs. If you have any questions or problems please contact our office at (850) 934-7545.

#### Wound

Proper care of the incision helps to prevent infection.

- ❖ You will have skin glue and a proxy strip covering the incision site. **PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE THE DRESSING**. It will come off on its own within 3 to 4 weeks after surgery. 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.
- ❖ 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.
- ❖ Keep the incision dry for 48 hours after surgery.
- ❖ You may SHOWER and get the incision wet after 48 hours. Avoid scrubbing your incision site. Do NOT soak the incision; avoid baths, hot tubs and swimming for 1 month after surgery.
- ❖ Check the incision daily for redness, swelling or drainage. Some redness and swelling is normal. It is normal for the incision site to itch, but avoid scratching.
- ❖ A small amount of clear or slightly blood tinged drainage from the incision is normal. Contact us if drainage persists for more than 2 days or if you have redness or swelling around the incision.
- ❖ Do not wash directly over the incision. Wash around the incision gently with soap and water and then let air dry. If you have fevers or chills, take your temperature with a thermometer. If you have a temperature of 100.5 degrees or higher for more than 4 hours, contact our office.
- ❖ Do not use any creams, lotions, ointments, or alcohol near or on the incision.
- ❖ It is normal for the incision site to itch, but avoid scratching.

#### For Patients with a Hard Collar

For the first 4 weeks, you must wear the hard collar at all times even when you shower and sleep. For added comfort, sleep on your back or side and place a cushion under the back or side of your neck. You may shower 5 days after surgery with the hard collar on and padding removed. To remove and apply padding, follow the instructions shown to you at the time your brace was fitted. When finished bathing, remove the collar and place a clean dressing over the incision if needed. Put the hard collar back on with clean and dry pads. No tub baths for 4 weeks.

#### Pain Relief

During the healing phase, it is common to have some pain, numbness, tingling, and weakness in your neck or arms. If you have an increase in pain once you return home, try these options to decrease the pain.

- ❖ Ice the back for 15-20 minutes each hour for 4 hours. Do not put the ice directly on the skin. Use a pre-made ice pack or put ice in a plastic bag then wrap the ice pack or bag in a towel before you use it.
- ❖ Reduce your activity for the next 24 hours (i.e. walking).
- ❖ You will be discharged with prescription medication for your surgical pain. All refills on prescriptions must be picked up in our office. We require a 72 hour notice Monday thru Friday for a refill to be processed.
- ❖ Remember, **ABSOLUTELY NO MEDICATION REFILLS WILL BE PROCESSED ON THE WEEKEND**. Please plan accordingly.
- ❖ Tylenol (acetaminophen): You may take up to 4000 milligrams per day. Percocet and Norco also contain Tylenol. If you have liver disease, do not take Tylenol without checking with us first.
- ❖ Do not take Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) (i.e., Ibuprofen, Motrin, Advil, Aleve, Celebrex, etc.) for 3 months. These medicines could delay bone healing.

The clinical staff will be working with you to balance pain medicine, pain management, and activity. The goal is to taper you off of your pain medicine by 6 weeks after surgery.

#### Exercise

- ❖ 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 4 weeks after surgery. It is okay to raise your arms to comb and wash your hair.
- ❖ Do not lift more than 10lbs for the first 4 weeks after surgery.
- ❖ Avoid stairs while you are wearing your collar- It

is a fall hazard.

- ❖ Walking is the best “exercise” after surgery and you need to walk DAILY.
- ❖ You should be able to gradually increase your distance until you can walk about one mile within one to two months after surgery.

#### Smoking

**DO NOT SMOKE**. This increases the chance that your bone will not heal properly. Smoking decreases the rate of skin and bone healing. Smoking also interferes with the effectiveness of your pain medication. This can impact the success of your cervical fusion.

#### Constipation

The combination of surgery, narcotic pain medicine, decreased activity level, and a change in your diet, can play a role in getting constipated. After surgery, it is common to have a problem with your bowels. Increasing your fiber intake, mobility, and taking a stool softener will help.

#### What to Eat

It is common to have a sore throat or hoarse voice for a few weeks after surgery. You may also feel a “catching” sensation in your throat. This may make it feel uncomfortable to swallow large bites of solid food. You should take small bites, chew well, and/or eat soft foods until this resolves. **If you have any trouble breathing call 911 and go to the nearest emergency room**. If you cannot swallow or have any major voice changes, call the office right away and ask to speak with the nurse at (850) 934-7545.

#### Dentist

As part of your surgery, spinal instrumentation was used. 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.

#### When to call the office

- ❖ Excessive redness, swelling, or drainage at the incision site, particularly swelling around the neck incision. Contact us if drainage persists for more than 2 days. Be prepared to describe what the drainage looks like, how it smells, and how much there is.
- ❖ If you have a temperature of 100.5 degrees or higher lasting longer than 4 hours.
- ❖ Redness, warmth, or tenderness in the back of the calf of your leg(s)
- ❖ A persistent headache that is different when sitting

#### Phone Numbers

If you have questions or concerns, please call **Neuromicrospine at 850-934-7545**