

Cervical Fusion Discharge Instructions

Dr. Julie York

- **ACTIVITY:** Some level of fatigue is expected for several weeks after the operation. Resume regular activity as tolerated. No lifting over 5 lbs. or strenuous activity until second follow up, typically 8 weeks after your surgery. You should walk as much as you feel able and slowly increase the distance. Wear any neck brace that has been provided as your surgeon has recommended. If in doubt, please call your surgeon's office for clarification. You may use a soft collar or rolled towels for comfort and positioning while in bed.
- **INCENTIVE SPIROMETER:** Please continue to use the incentive spirometer once you have returned home until your activity level is back to near normal. This helps to reduce the risk of any respiratory complications.
- **DIET:** Advance your diet from soft to regular as tolerated. Some discomfort with swallowing may last for several weeks following surgery. Remember to chew your food thoroughly and moisten it with liquid prior to swallowing. Maintain a balanced fluid intake.
- **TRAVEL:** NO driving for 1-2 weeks, or until your post-op follow up appointment.

- **DERMABOND PATIENT: WOUND CARE:** Your incision is covered with a skin glue called Dermabond. May leave wound open to air immediately after surgery if no drainage present. Do not expose to the sunlight for 1 month.
- **DERMABOND PATIENT: BATHING:** You may shower and wash your neck 24 hours following surgery. Use gentle fragrance free soap and do not soak the incision site for 1 month. Do not scrub incision area. Keep wound clean and dry except for showering.

- **STAPLE/SUTURE PATIENT: WOUND CARE:** Change your dressing daily for 5 days, then it is okay to leave it open to air. There should be no drainage from your incision. If you have steri-strips on your incision, gently lift them off after 7-10 days by pulling them gently toward the incision. When both ends are free, lift them off the incision. If your skin is irritated by operation site you may apply 1% hydrocortisone cream. If you have any changes in your wound appearance (redness or drainage) or you have a temperature, notify your physician. If you have staples, schedule an appointment as soon as you go home to have them removed in 1-2 weeks.
- **SUTURE/STAPLE PATIENT: BATHING:** You should not get your incision wet until at least 5 days after your surgery. Do not soak for 2 weeks. You may shower if the incision is covered with waterproof dressing. Always change the dressing immediately after showering, and allow to air dry if it has become damp prior to putting on the fresh dressing.

- **SUB Q SUTURES WITH STERI-STRIPS:** Remove the dressing on post-op day 2. If you have steri-strips in place you do not need to replace the bandage. Steri-strips should remain in place for 10-14 days. Do not try to remove them prior to 14 days after surgery.
- **SUB Q SUTURES WITH STERI-STRIPS: BATHING:** It is ok to shower at this time. Do not take a bath, swim or soak the incision for 4 weeks.

- **PAIN MANAGEMENT:** You will receive prescriptions for pain control medications with specific instruction on the dosing. Typical post-operative regimen includes:
 - **Pain killer:** Opioid narcotic (such as Percocet, Norco, Oxycodone, Dilaudid or other) to help with incisional/post-surgical pain control.
 - **Muscle relaxant:** To help with post-operative neck muscle spasms.
 - **Gabapentin** (aka: Neurontin): Non-narcotic pain reliever to help with nerve pain.

- **MEDICATIONS:** You will be able to resume most of your home medications after the discharge. Specific medication instruction may vary depending on your condition:
 - **Tylenol:** May take as instructed on the bottle.
 - **Aspirin:** Do not use until you have been cleared to do so by your surgeon.
 - **Plavix:** Do not use for 5 days after surgery.
 - **Coumadin:** Do not use for 5 days after surgery.
 - **NSAIDs** (ibuprofen, naproxen, etc.): Do not use until discussed with your surgeon at your post-op visit.
 - **Pain medication:** Follow the instructions on the prescription.
 - **Steroids:** You may need to take medication to reduce inflammation. Be sure to follow the directions to slowly reduce the amount of medication you are taking. Stop taking this medication and call your doctor if you have stomach upset or stomach pain.

- **MEDICATION REFILLS:** Please allow at least 2 business days for ALL medication refills to be processed. Do not allow yourself to completely run out before contacting your pharmacy for a refill. Controlled medications such as pain killers will require doctor's written prescription and may take longer to process.
- **BOWEL CARE:** The medications you are taking for pain can cause constipation. Your bowels should begin to work before you go home. Please see specific recommendations to prevent or treat constipation at the end of these instructions.
- **URINARY:** If you have not urinated in 6 hours after your surgery call Dr. York's office at (503) 561-7240. If it is after hours you will be transferred to an answering service.
- **REST:** Remember take several rest periods during the day. Most patients feel more tired for the first 2 weeks after having general anesthesia.
- **RETURN TO WORK:** The length of time you will be off work depends on your job. Your doctor will help you decide when it is time to return to work.
- **COMPLICATIONS-** Please, contact our office if you have fever over 100.4°, drainage from the wound, worsening pain, wound redness or swelling, new numbness or weakness.
- **FOLLOW UP:** Your first follow up appointment will most likely be scheduled prior to surgery. If not, please contact our office to verify scheduling. Typical post-op appointment is 2 weeks after operation for wound check.

Bowel care recommendations:

Constipation is likely if you:

1. Have less than three bowel movements in a week.
2. Are straining.
3. Have lumpy or hard stools.
4. Have the feeling of an unfinished bowel movement or blockage.

*Constipation can be caused by medicines, such as iron, narcotic pain medicine, antacids; a low fiber diet; lack of physical activity and some medical conditions. **If untreated, constipation can lead to a blockage requiring medical help.***

HELPFUL HINTS:

- Drink 8 cups of water daily, unless limited by your doctor.
- Eat a variety of foods high in fiber, such as: berries, prunes, apples, peaches, green beans, carrots, corn, peas, broccoli, whole grains, wild rice, oatmeal, whole wheat bread, oat-bran muffins and nuts.
- Be active every day. If your doctor says it is ok, try a 20-30 minute walk.
- Don't wait! If you ignore or delay the urge to go, constipation can get worse.
- Try not to strain.

WHAT MEDICINES CAN I TAKE?

Step 1

Senna 2 tablets by mouth two times daily and docusate Sodium 100 mg by mouth two times daily. If no result in 24 hours then...

Step 2

Senna 3 tablets by mouth three times daily and Docusate Sodium 100 mg by mouth three times daily. If no result in 24 hours then...

Step 3

Senna 4 tablets three times daily and Ducolax 3 tablets by mouth three times daily and Docusate Sodium 250 mg by mouth twice daily.

- *If you have loose stool or diarrhea, decrease or stop the medicines.
- Call your doctor if you have not had a bowel movement in 24 to 48 hours **after** trying the above medicines.

At home you could also try:

PRUNE JUICE COCKTAIL

1/2 cup unsweetened apple juice

4 tablespoons wheat bran

6 ounces prune juice

Mix well and store in refrigerator. Take one tablespoon each day and slowly add more if needed.

Caregiver Acknowledgement:

I acknowledge receipt, review, and understanding of discharge instructions as well as attest that I will provide transportation following surgery and not allow the patient to drive for 24 hours after sedation.

Patient Caregiver Signature

Date

Time

Medication:

Pain Medication Given

Time Given

Next Dose Due