



## Oregon Spine Care

19255 SW 65th Ave, Suite 200, Tualatin, OR, 97062

Office (503) 828-1150 Fax (503) 828-1160

www.oregonspinecare.org

### CERVICAL SURGERY INSTRUCTIONS

#### What to expect

- Pain:

It is normal to expect incisional pain and soreness around your trapezial and shoulder regions.

It is important to keep in mind that pain medications do not take away 100% of your pain. Taking the pain medication at consistent intervals will provide more effective pain relief. Keeping a log sheet may help you manage your recovery more effectively.

Taking pain medication with food on your stomach and/or with plenty of water helps prevent an upset stomach. Non-steroidal medications such as Ibuprofen or Alleve are fine but should be avoided if you had a cervical fusion.

You should refrain from alcoholic while taking narcotic medications. DO NOT stop taking your pain medication suddenly- especially if you have been taking narcotics consistently for 3-4 weeks. Stopping your pain medications abruptly can lead to rebound pain and to withdrawal symptoms.

- Constipation:

The number one side effect of narcotics is constipation so it is important to use oral stool softeners (Colace or Senna S) as well as drink prune juice. If you haven't had a bowel movement within 3 days of your surgery, you should try an over the counter suppository (Ducolax) as well.

- Low Grade Fever:

It is not uncommon to have a low grade fever 1 to 3 days after surgery ( $T < 103^0$ ) and this is primarily due to atelectasis which is an inflammation of the lungs. This respiratory process is due to the fact that your lungs have not fully inflated after surgery and can be remedied by taking a slow, deep, breath and filling your lungs with air 10 times an hour while awake. If you stayed in the hospital, you can also do this by using the incentive spirometer machine.

#### Activities

- Walking:

You may walk as much as possible inside your home but safety must be a priority. Throw rugs and clutter should be removed and any type of electrical wire should be tapped down. If possible, you may walk outside your home for short distances but outside surfaces should be flat, smooth, and not slippery (i.e. no hills, gravel roads, or wet mossy sidewalks).

- Lifting:

You are asked to lift only which is necessary for personal hygiene and eating. This means no lifting greater than 5-10 pounds until your next follow-up appointment. It is also recommended to avoid reaching type activities. Keep items you need on a regular basis in close proximity.



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- **Physical therapy:**

Limit any bending or twisting type movements until your post-op appointment. Physical therapy may be prescribed between 4-6 weeks after your surgery depending on your recovery.

- **Driving:**

As a general rule no driving while using prescription narcotics. According to the pharmacy, you shouldn't operate heavy machinery while taking narcotics.

- **Sleeping:**

You can sleep however you feel comfortable. Often times patients feel the most comfortable sleeping on either side or back using pillows under or between your knees for comfort.

- **Cervical brace for fusion patients:**

The neck brace given to you should be worn whenever you are out of bed and up ambulating for more than 10 minutes. The brace is to provide comfort and stability while your soft tissues are healing. Brace wear is typically weaned off by 6 weeks after surgery.

### Incisional Care/Showers

It is important to keep your incision clean and dry. Before you take a shower, place a Tegaderm over the bandage. After your shower, remove the Tegaderm and apply a new dressing. Leave the Steri-strips which are covering your skin incision in place. Continue this process until you see us back two weeks after surgery.

Ice packs are sometimes helpful as a comfort measure in reducing pain levels. You may use ice pack around your incisional area every 4 hours if desired. Do not leave the ice pack on for more than 20 minutes at a time. We recommend using the blue gel ice packs that are available at most pharmacies.

### Meals

If you had an anterior cervical procedure, start by eating soft foods. It can take up to 6-8 weeks after surgery have your throat swelling go down. Advance the thickness of the foods you can tolerate slowly. Keep in mind the need to increase daily fluids and add fiber and fruits to your diet. This will help you to avoid constipation as this is a common side effect while taking pain medications and having limited activity.

### Reasons to call for assistance

- For any new weakness or constant increase in pain.
- For any difficulty in breathing or swallowing.
- If there is any increased pain, swelling, redness, or drainage in you incisional area.
- For fever > 103°