



## HOME CARE AFTER NECK SURGERY

### **INCISION**

You may have staples, sutures or steristrips when you are discharged from the hospital. It is all right to take a shower as soon as you get home. You may get your incision wet, just don't scrub or rub over it. It is not necessary to cover your incision after showering – just keep it clean and dry throughout the day. You will need to observe your incision for any signs of redness, swelling or drainage. It is normal to have a small amount of redness at the staple insertion sites. This should go away when the staples are removed.

If your staples were removed in the hospital you may have several pieces of tape (steristrips) covering the incision. You will need to leave the steristrips in place 7-10 days, and then you may remove them if they have not come off before this time.

If you have staples or sutures you will need to return to the office in 7-10 days following surgery to have them removed. Please call our office for an appointment.

You will have hip sutures following a fusion if your doctor used your hipbone for the fusion. These sutures may need to stay in for at least two weeks, and may be cared for in the same manner as your neck or back sutures.

You will have a follow-up appointment with your doctor 4-6 weeks after the surgery. This appointment can be made at the time of your suture removal, or by telephone if you do not need to return for this. If you have any questions or problems before your appointment, please feel free to call our office nurses who will be happy to help you. All phone calls are cleared through the nurses prior to being brought to your doctor's attention.

### **ACTIVITY**

1. No lifting, bending or stooping.
2. No sex, shopping trips or housecleaning for at least 3-4 weeks after surgery. You may then resume limited sexual activity. When you do resume sexual activity, please begin with a more passive role. Remember to be careful, and if an activity increases your pain, don't do it or stop and proceed more slowly.
3. You may ride in a car as soon as you feel up to it. You will need to get out and walk every 20-30 minutes. Your doctor will determine when you may begin driving. However, this is not usually recommended for 4-6 weeks.
4. You may walk up and down short flights of stairs as soon as you are released from the hospital.
5. You will need to begin a daily walking program starting with short distances and gradually increasing your walking time. When you return to see your doctor in six weeks you should be walking at least a mile in the morning and a mile in the afternoon. A vigorous walking program after surgery is beneficial in speeding recovery.

### **DIET**

Decreased activity and pain medications contribute to developing constipation. Drinking plenty of liquids including fruit juices and eating food high in fiber such as bran flakes helps to aid digestion. As you gradually increase your activity, constipation should not be a problem for you. You may use over-the-counter laxatives if necessary such as Metamucil or Milk of Magnesia.

Avoid putting on extra weight after surgery. Extra weight puts undue strain on your back. Avoid foods high in calories and low in nutritional value. Fast foods and most snacks are very high in calories.

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## **PAIN**

A certain amount of pain is to be expected after surgery. As you are recovering at home, you should gradually be using less pain medication. You should be off all potentially addictive pain medications within 1-2 weeks after surgery.

Frequent changes of position, walking, heat or ice and short rest periods all contribute to pain relief. Remember, it is going to take time for postoperative inflammation and nerve sensitivity to subside.

## **CERVICAL COLLARS**

If you have had a cervical fusion, it may be necessary for you to wear a cervical collar for six weeks following surgery. Your collar should be worn at all times unless your doctor instructs you otherwise.

## **POSTOPERATIVE DEPRESSION**

It is normal to feel emotionally let down after surgery. You may have days when you feel tired and discouraged. Keep in mind that these feelings are not uncommon and should resolve as you gradually resume your daily routine. Maintaining a positive attitude helps to speed recovery. Think Positive!

## **COMPLICATIONS**

Be sure to call the nurse if:

1. You develop fever.
2. You develop drainage from the incision, swelling, redness or increased pain.
3. You develop any weakness or numbness not present before surgery.
4. You have any difficulty controlling your bowels or bladder.