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Discharge Instructions for Cervical Spine Procedures

You had a cervical spine fusion. During this procedure, your doctor locked together (fused) some of the bones in your neck. This limits movement of these bones to help relieve your pain. Here is what you need to know about homecare following a cervical fusion. If you smoke, you should quit; smoking slows healing of the bone.

Activity

On the first evening after surgery, you should primarily rest. You can walk limited distances in the household with the assistance of a family member (as there may still be residual effects from the anesthesia/medications received during/after surgery).

Beginning on the day after surgery and going forward, you are encouraged to gradually increase your activity level. You should take frequent short walks throughout the day. You may also go up and down stairs as much as you can tolerate. Walking outside or walking on a treadmill at a slow speed is okay. Rest whenever necessary in between periods of activity. For the first two weeks, avoid overly vigorous physical activities, and do not lift more than five to ten pounds.

Arrange your household to keep the items you need within reach.
Remove electrical cords, throw rugs, and anything else that may cause you to fall.

Follow your doctor's instructions for wearing a cervical collar or brace (if indicated). The neck collar or brace is important because it supports and correctly positions your neck after surgery. Be sure to follow instructions for its care, use, and the length of time you must wear it.

Do not drive until your doctor says its okay. This will most likely be when you can move your neck from side to side freely and without pain. Never drive while you are taking narcotic pain medication. Your ability to drive will be determined at your first postoperative visit. During the first two weeks after surgery, you may travel in a car as a passenger (assuming you can independently maneuver into/out of the vehicle).

Speak to your doctor regarding returning to work.

Wound Care

Leave the surgical dressing/bandage in place for 48 hours. At that point, the dressing can be removed. There is no need to place another dressing over the incision.

Showering

Avoid showering for **three days** after surgery. Thereafter, you may shower per your usual routine. Simply blot dry the incision area with a towel after each shower. For two weeks after surgery, avoid submerging the incision in a bathtub, hot tub, or pool.

Call 911 right away if you have any of the following:

Swelling in the neck

Chest pain

Shortness of breath

Trouble controlling your bowels or bladder

Painful calf that is warm to the touch and tender with pressure

Otherwise, call your doctor immediately if you have any of the following:

Fever above 100.4 degrees, shaking, or chills

Increased drainage, redness, tenderness, or swelling at the incision site

Opening of the incision

Postoperative Appointment

An appointment with your surgeon has been scheduled:

Please contact the office with any questions. (401) 632-4150
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