

ANTERIOR CERVICAL FUSION POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

- 1) Expect to be discharged the day following surgery, although occasionally patients stay for two days (your insurance company may or may not allow that).
- 2) About 3-4 days after surgery, your throat will become swollen. This usually lasts 1-2 days and you may want to sleep in a recliner for that time. It improves quickly but call the office if it persists.
- 3) You will be discharged home with pain medications, muscle relaxants and a 6 day course of steroids to help with the neck swelling.
- 4) **NO NOT TAKE ANTI-INFLAMMATORIES** (Advil, Aleve, Ibuprofen, Aspirin) for **TWO MONTHS** after surgery. They inhibit bone healing. Tylenol is fine
- 5) Ice the incision and the back of your neck three to four times a day, for 10 minutes, for the first week post-operatively.
- 6) You may drive 5-7 days after surgery.
- 7) The stitches are dis-solvable. The incision should be kept dry for 5 days; you can shower with the dressing on. You can leave it open to air and the steri-strips will fall off over the next 1-2 weeks.
- 8) Expect neck pain for 1-2 weeks after surgery at the incision and even extending out to the shoulder. Some people have a flare up of arm pain. Twinges in the arms and tingling down the arms for the first 4 weeks following surgery. This is just inflammation and will settle down. If it persists, please call the office.
- 9) Swallowing is uncomfortable for the first month after surgery. Some patients notice lump in their throat for several months but it usually resolves sooner. You may eat whatever you want but certain foods may be more difficult.

- 10) Call the office after you get home and schedule your post-operative appointment which will be about 2-3 weeks after surgery. If you do not already have one scheduled.
- 11) Physical Therapy begins usually at about 4 weeks post-operatively. You will be given a prescription for it at your post- operative appointment.
- 12) For the first month after surgery, you may lift up to 10 lbs. The second month you may lift 20-25 lbs and after two months, you may lift as much as you can tolerate. You may walk as much as you want right away and use stationary exercise bike after 2 weeks. No high impact exercise for 2 months after surgery.
- 13) The fusion takes 6 months to 1 year to complete. You will have x-rays at post-operative visits at 2-3 weeks, 3 months, 6 months and 9-12 months. The hardware will keep your spine stable until the fusion occurs.
- 14) Pain improves quickly after surgery, but muscle weakness can take several months and numbness can take more than a year. Sometimes, there is some permanent numbness, especially if you had it for a long time before the surgery.
- 15) Return to work is determined by your occupation, level of pain, function post-operatively, and the restrictions outlined above.
- 16) If you have questions, please call the office.