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### **Post Operative Instructions for Cervical and Lumbar Spine Surgery**

#### **Post Operative Appointment(s):**

Call the office when you get home from the hospital to make a post operative appointment for 7-10 days after surgery. Some patients may require up to three post operative visits, but all post operative visits are completed within 90 days from your surgery date.

#### **Post Operative Pain:**

It is not unusual to have pain, in the first few weeks after surgery, in and around the incision with mild swelling and redness.

- Cervical Spine (neck) Patients

You may experience some persistent pain on the area between the shoulder blades, neck, and arms. Muscle spasms of the neck and numbness of the arms or hands are not uncommon.

- Lumbar Spine (back) Patients

You may experience some low back pain, leg pain, and muscle spasms of the back or legs.

#### **Prescriptions:**

A narcotic pain reliever will be given to you when you are discharged from the hospital. You will be given enough to last one week. If you need more, one refill can be ordered. Sometimes a muscle relaxant may also be ordered. If you are not allergic to them, over the counter NSAIDs (Aleve, Advil, Motrin) may be used when you stop using the pain relievers. No prescriptions will be called in after business hours or on the weekends.

One of the side effects of narcotic medications is constipation. If you experience this problem you may take over the counter stool softeners (Colace, Peri-Colace) or Milk of Magnesia. Follow the instructions on the package. Narcotic analgesics can depress the central nervous system causing impaired judgment and coordination, and may impair the ability to operate a motor vehicle or other machinery. Please refrain from driving while taking these medications.

## **Activity:**

Most patients go home the day of surgery or the day after surgery. Walk as often as comfortable. Rest but don't spend the whole day in bed. You may ride in a car starting the first day after surgery. Do not drive for the first week after surgery. Do not lift anything more than 10 lbs until you come back for a post-operative appointment. Do not do excessive house or yard work just because you are home from work. Sexual activity is permitted whenever comfort permits. Returning to work is on an individual basis and should be discussed with your doctor before surgery. Many patients return to work in a week or less.

### • Cervical Spine (neck) Patients

If a metal plate was used to secure the bone graft(s), you only need to wear a soft collar for one week after surgery. If a plate was not placed, you will need to wear the collar for about four weeks.

### • Lumbar Spine (back) Patients

You may climb stairs but not excessively. Avoid excessive bending over, if you need to get to ground level lower yourself by bending your knees rather than bending from the waist. When sitting, avoid soft surfaces. It is better to sit on a chair with good lumbar support. If you had a lumbar fusion you may have to wear a lumbar corset for 12 weeks. You can take it off at bed time and to shower. Do not wear it too tightly.

## **Incision Care**

You may shower and dressing is likely to get wet. If it does, change it with a clean, dry gauze, some of which you may be able to get before you leave the hospital. You may remove the dressing after about 5-7 days if the incision is dry. There will be steri-strips (white band-aids) on the incision, leave those in place until they fall off by themselves or they are removed in the office. There will not be stitches to remove in that case. If there are staples, they will be removed at your post operative office visit.

## **PLEASE CALL THE OFFICE:**

- **If the incision drains persistently**
- **You have excessive pain**
- **You develop a fever over 101 F**
- **If you develop weakness in your arms or legs**
- **If you develop urinary retention**
- **If you experience calf pain or leg/foot swelling**
- **If you develop shortness of breath, chest pain or a productive cough**