

Anterior Cervical Discectomy

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

The following instructions are designed to outline home care following neck surgery. These instructions, which may be modified by your doctors, are to assist you following hospital discharge until your first post-operative visit.

Special Instructions

Neck Brace: It is necessary for you to wear your neck brace until your physician gives you instructions to discontinue it. The brace keeps your cervical spine immobile until healing occurs.

Skin Care: The skin under the brace should be kept clean and dry to prevent irritation. Inspect the skin around the brace daily for any skin breakdown. To do this, lie on your back on your bed. Release the Velcro fasteners, and remove the front portion. Look at the skin using a mirror. If you notice any area of irritation or breakdown, leave the brace off to expose the area to air. Do this for ten minutes three times a day.

It is important that you do not move your head or twist your shoulders during the time the brace is off. You must be lying down to do this, as you should not be up without your brace. It may be easier to have someone assist you with inspecting the skin, washing, and shaving.

Reapply the brace by placing it over your neck and reattaching the straps.

Activities

Driving: Driving may cause strain as your spine is healing. You may ride as a passenger, but if you travel long distances, you should stop every hour or so and walk for several minutes.

Lifting: Do not lift anything heavier than ten pounds. Avoid twisting of your neck, or making any sudden movements.

Exercise: Avoid all strenuous activities, including heavy housework. Walking is encouraged. Start with short distances and increase the distance as tolerated. Wear comfortable, low-heeled shoes and stay on flat, even surfaces. You may climb stairs as soon as you feel able to. Be sure to use the bannister, or handrail.

Working: Ask your physician about returning to work before your discharge from the hospital. Patients typically return to office work in six to twelve weeks. Heavier work may be performed approximately six months after surgery.

(continued)

Call your doctor if:

- you notice a change in the wound or skin such as increased redness, swelling, or drainage of any kind.
- you have increased pain, weakness, or numbness in your arms.
- you have a fever or chills.
- you experience discomfort from wearing the brace.

Important phone numbers

To reach your doctor, call the neurosurgery office day or night at 322-7417.

CASE MANAGER

Name: _____

Phone number: _____