

Post-operative Instructions

The following guidelines are recommended after your spine surgery to ensure a good recovery. You may be given additional instructions by your surgeon when discharged. If you have any questions or concerns about your surgery please contact our office at (816) 363-2500.

Activity

You may be up and about to take care of your personal needs but avoid any strenuous activity. Do not lift more than 5 pounds or more than a gallon of milk. Avoid pushing or pulling.

Going up and down stairs is permissible. Be sure to use the handrails and take one step at a time until comfortable. Take precautions to prevent falls and use assistance if unsure. You may discontinue the TED hose or white stockings once you are up and walking.

If you had back surgery: Avoid bending or twisting at the waist. Bend at your knees (squat) when picking up objects. Avoid sitting for longer than 45 minutes at a time. You may alternate from sitting, lying down and standing.

If you have had neck surgery: Avoid repetitive or excessive flexion (looking down) or extension (looking up). Limited side-to-side motion as tolerated is permitted.

Exercise

Walking is the best “exercise” after surgery and you need to walk daily. You should not engage in any other exercise until instructed by your physician. Gradually increase the distance you can walk up to a mile within one month after surgery. Avoid high heels.

Collar / Brace

The collar/brace is to be worn at all times when you are up. You do not need to wear the collar to sleep unless instructed to by your physician. You may remove the collar/brace for brief periods to shower and attend to personal hygiene but remember to maintain your neck/back in a neutral position and avoid any bending. The back brace does not need to be worn when getting up at night to use the restroom.

Incision Care

Keep the incision dry for 48 hours after surgery. You do not need to apply any ointment. You do not need to keep the incision covered unless there is drainage from the incision. Contact us if drainage persists for more than 2 days or if you have redness or excessive swelling around the incision.

You may have stitches or steri-strips (small adhesive strips) over the incision. If you have stitches these need to stay in place until you see the doctor. Do not be concerned if the strips roll up or fall off. If the strips remain after ten days you should remove them. There will not be any stitches under the steri-strips that need to be removed. All of the stitches are from the inside of your incision and will absorb over time. It is normal for the incision site to itch. Do not scratch your incision.

If you have fevers or chills, take your temperature with a thermometer. If you have a temperature of 100.5 or higher, contact our office.

Bathing

You may shower and get the incision wet after 48 hours. Avoid scrubbing your incision site. Do not soak the incision; so avoid baths, hot tubs or swimming.

Driving

Do not drive for the first two weeks. You may ride in an automobile for short distances as tolerated.

Sexual Intercourse

Sexual intercourse may be resumed at any time as tolerated. Go slowly and avoid painful positions.

Pain Medication

You will be given a prescription for pain medication when you are discharged from the hospital. You may take the pain medication with a snack or meal if stomach upset occurs. If you need a refill, have your pharmacy fax a refill request to our office at (816) 363-8741.

Diet

Eat a healthy, well balanced diet and avoid extra Calories. You may have a decreased appetite after surgery. If you have had neck surgery, you may have temporary difficulty swallowing solid food (such as bread or meat), which should improve in several days. You may resume your over the counter supplements when you return home.

Constipation

You may be constipated after your surgery, so increase your intake of fiber (fruits and vegetables) and fluid (unless instructed otherwise). You may use your choice of over-the-counter laxatives such as Dulcolax, Senokot-S, Colace, or Milk of Magnesia). If you do not have a bowel movement, use an over-the-counter enema such as Fleets as indicated on the bottle. If you are still unable to have a bowel movement, or have nausea, vomiting or abdominal bloating, contact your family doctor for instructions.

Smoking

You should not smoke after surgery. Smoking can decrease the rate of skin and bone healing. The hospital campus is entirely smoke-free so you will not be allowed to go outside to smoke. Contact your primary care physician for smoking cessation options prior to surgery.

Office Follow-up

You will need a post-operative appointment with your surgeon for an incision check and follow-up. You may receive an appointment card at the time of your surgery scheduling. If you do not have an appointment please contact the office.

If you have any questions about your surgical procedure or post-operative management, call the office at 816-363-2500.