

## Post Operative Discharge Instructions

### **Diet:**

You should advance your diet slowly and gradually to your home diet as swallowing becomes easier. This is especially true if you had an anterior cervical spine procedure (surgery performed through the front of your neck).

### **Activities:**

- We encourage you to walk frequently. Please use comfortable shoes when walking and avoid walking on uneven surfaces or in poorly-lit areas.
- Please avoid strenuous activities and exercises, especially, during your first month after surgery, including aerobics, jogging, running, jumping, and using a treadmill.
- Please avoid twisting, turning, leaning forward and bending.
- Please avoid pushing, pulling, moving or lifting objects that are heavier than a gallon of milk (about 8.5 pounds)
- If you had a spinal fusion procedure, you might be instructed to wear a cervical collar or a body brace. We will provide you with specific instructions on the use of your collar or body brace.
- You may resume sexual activities when this is comfortable for you.

### **Driving:**

- DO NOT drive if you are taking pain medications, muscle relaxants, anti-seizure medications or if you are in pain. In general, you should be able to drive when this is comfortable for you. This will vary based on your overall condition and the type of procedure you had. Also, the first few times you start driving after your surgery, you should have someone with you in the car to ensure that you are comfortable driving.

### **Return to Work:**

- In general you can return to work when you feel ready. However, we have to take into considerations the type of work you do and the type of surgery you had. Please let us know how you feel about returning to work during your first post-op follow-up appointment.

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### **Shower:**

- You may start taking showers ON the THIRD day after surgery. Until then, you could use sponge baths. Avoid rubbing the wound or applying water directly on the wound.
- Let the wound air dry after showering.
- Avoid using bath tubs, hot tubs, jacuzzis and swimming pools where the wound might be submerged under water, to prevent wound complications and infections, until you are cleared by us during your follow-up appointment.

### **Wound Care:**

- For most procedures, we use dissolvable sutures that will be placed UNDER your skin. In certain circumstances, we might use staples, or a running suture (baseball stitch) which will be visible on your incision after removing the dressing.
- You may remove your wound dressing 48 hours after surgery:
- If you have a steri-strip on your wound, leave it alone until it falls off on its own.
- DO NOT place anything on the wound, such as creams, lotions, ointments, vitamins or aloe until you are cleared to do so during your post-op follow-up visit.
- Always try to keep your wound clean and dry.
- Avoid rubbing or scratching the wound. If the wound feels itchy, you may use a wet piece of cloth and apply gentle pressure on the itchy site.

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

- Please refer to our "Pain Management Agreement" document for further details.
- You will be given prescriptions for certain pain medication(s) and/or muscle relaxant. Please take your medication(s) as instructed.
- Your post-operative incisional pain and muscle spasm might take several days before they subside. We recommend the following to reduce your pain and muscle spasm:
  - DO NOT let your pain and muscle spasm get out of control.
  - Use your pain and muscle relaxant medication(s) as instructed.
  - Muscle spasm tends to become worse with prolonged periods of inactivity. Therefore, we encourage you to get out of bed, walk, move your neck and body in a normal manner.
  - You could apply ice packs to your muscles to reduce the spasm.
  - Stay hydrated.

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**Post Operative Bowel Regimen:**

- Constipation is one of the most common side effects after surgery and with the use of pain medications.
- You will be given prescriptions for stool softeners to prevent or reduce post-operative constipation.
- In addition, we encourage you to add high-fiber food items to your diet, including high fiber vegetables, fruits, cereals and wheat bread.
- Stay hydrated.

**Follow Up Appointment:**

- On the following business day, after you have been discharged from the hospital, you should call our office at **480.424.5255** to schedule your follow-up appointment with us in 3 to 4 weeks.

**Questions/Concerns:**

- Please call our office at **480.424.5255** if you develop any of the following:
  - Fever with a temperature of 101F (38.3C) or more.
  - Chills and night sweats.
  - Increased redness, swelling, and tenderness around the incision.
  - Wound dehiscence and breakdown.
  - Leakage or drainage from the incision, especially, if amount of drainage is not decreasing. It is not uncommon to have some minimal oozing from the incision after removing the dressing.
  - Worsening headaches, nausea, vomiting, changes with vision, weakness with face, arms, or legs, changes in sensation, changes in bowel or bladder function, or seizure-like activities.
  - Difficulty breathing.
  - Difficulty swallowing.
  - Chest pain.
  - Pain and tenderness in your calf muscles.
  - Inadequate pain relief.

Thank you for allowing us to provide you  
a world-class neurosurgical care