

DANBURY HOSPITAL

ANTERIOR CERVICAL SPINE SURGERY

This is a list of instructions to assist in your recovery following your neck surgery. These general instructions should be used as guidelines.

Post-operative Visit

- Make an appointment with your surgeon for a post-operative follow-up visit. This is usually 2 to 3 weeks after the surgery.
- X-rays may be taken to check your healing and the placement of the graft and/or hardware if used.
- You will discuss return to work with your surgeon.

Pain

- Generally, neck pain following surgery is minimal.
- You may have some muscular discomfort along the back of your neck and spasms between the shoulder blades.
- You may have difficulty swallowing or hoarseness. This should pass in 10-14 days.
- If your own bone was used for the graft, the donor site is usually more painful than your neck wound.

Medication

- You will be given prescriptions for pain medication and /or muscle relaxants when you are discharged.
- Check when your prescription is due to be refilled so that you don't run out. Call the surgeon during office hours to renew the prescription. **On call or covering surgeons may not refill a prescription for pain medication.**

Collars

- After surgery your neck may be supported by a cervical (neck) collar. Collars can be hard or soft.
- If you need a collar your surgeon will advise you on the type of collar you will wear and how long you should wear it.
- You may be given a soft collar. A soft collar may be worn for a few weeks.
- You may be given a hard collar depending on the number of levels fused and if any hardware was used in the surgery. A hard collar may be worn for 4 to 10 weeks.
- Ask your surgeon if you are unsure about the type of surgery you have had.

Bathing

- You can shower and wash your hair 24 hours after surgery. You must keep the waterproof dressing intact so that the wounds (incisions) do not get wet.
- If you are wearing a hard collar, the nurses will give you a second collar to be worn while showering. Change your collars in front of a mirror to keep your head

and neck still. This will also help to make sure you are wearing the collar properly.

- The hard collar can sometimes be removed depending on the extent of your surgery. Your surgeon will advise you.

Dressings

- If you have dressings, you can remove the dressing on the 5th day after your surgery. This will leave the wound (incision) open to air.
- The stitches (sutures) we use most often do not need to be removed. They will dissolve by themselves over 6-8 weeks. Sometimes a small piece of a dissolvable suture may remain in the wound and may even stick out through the wound. If this happens tell your surgeon at your office visit.
- Sometimes your surgeon may use sutures or staples that will need to be removed. If this is the case, you should make your post-operative office visit for 10-14 days from the date of your surgery.

Driving

- You can usually drive yourself 10 days after the surgery if your neck feels comfortable.
- You can drive a car with a soft collar on.
- You may **NOT** drive if you are wearing a hard collar. You can be a passenger in a car after one week.

Please call the office if you have any questions.

Call us if you see any of the following:

- Increase in post-surgery pain,
- Fever higher than 101.5 degrees,
- Chills, drainage, swelling of the wound, or any redness of the wound. If there is drainage, note the color, amount and consistency.
- You are having headaches.