

DANBURY HOSPITAL

POSTERIOR CERVICAL SPINE SURGERY WITH FUSION

This is a list of instructions to assist you 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
- The surgical procedure you had may have been performed in conjunction with another surgeon. Postoperative questions can be addressed with either surgeon.

Pain

- You will have some post-operative pain. Surgery on the back of the neck can be quite uncomfortable for several weeks after surgery.
- Ice is generally very helpful. It is recommended that you place ice over the back of the neck and shoulders for 20 minutes 4 times per day.

Medication

- You will be discharged with prescriptions for pain medication and/or muscle relaxants.
- Check when your prescription is due to be refilled so you don't run out. **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.
- The soft collar does not need to be worn all the time. Wear your soft collar for comfort or when driving in a car unless told otherwise by your surgeon.
- If you have a hard collar, it must be worn at all times, even sleeping. A hard collar may be worn for 4 to 10 weeks.

Bathing

- You can shower and wash your hair 24 hours following the surgery. You must keep the waterproof dressing intact so 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

- You can remove the dressing on the 5th day after 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. If this happens tell your surgeon at your office visit.
- Sometimes your surgeon may use sutures or staples that will have to be removed. If this is the case, you should make your post-operative visit for 10-14 days from the date of surgery.
- If you have Steri-Strips (white tapes covering the skin around your incision) then your sutures are under the skin and will dissolve. After the Steri-Strips get wet, they will curl up & fall off by themselves.
- If you have surgical glue let it slowly flake off rather than peeling it off.

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.