

DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS FOLLOWING SPINAL FUSION SURGERY

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- No lifting over 5-10 pounds.
- Walking is good exercise. Frequent short walks are recommended.
- Avoid bending, lifting, or twisting during the first three months after surgery.
- When you are able to begin lifting, bend with your knees (squat down), not your back. You will need to do this for the rest of your life.
- You may climb stairs once a day for the first two weeks following surgery if tolerated. After this you may gradually increase this.
- You may engage in activity, which you tolerate, that does not cause you pain at the time or the next day.
- Avoid prolonged sitting. Limit sitting to 20-30 minutes at a time.
- During the first two weeks following discharge from the hospital, make time for regular rest periods. Avoid sleeping on your stomach.
- For comfort, use a small pillow under your knees when lying on your back or between your knees when lying on your side.
- Until you resume more normal activity, work at pumping your ankles frequently (every 1-2 hours). This helps with circulation and preventing blood clots.
- These are guidelines to follow. If you have questions about activity limitations after discharge, feel free to call the office.

SPECIFIC FOR FUSIONS:

- If you have a brace, you must wear it whenever you are out of bed. This may be for 3-6 months following surgery. Check with your doctor regarding the length of time it must be worn as this varies with each individual.
- The brace does not need to be worn in the shower. However, if you are more comfortable with it on, it may be worn in the shower. Dry the brace off after your shower. Avoid bending or twisting while in the shower.
- You may wear your brace next to your skin, but you will be more comfortable wearing a white tee shirt under your brace.
- Your brace may be cleaned with soap and water. Do not clean it with rubbing alcohol.
- Any change in your brace wear needs to be directed by your doctor.
- You may have an incision on your hip area if a bone graft was taken. This needs to stay clean and dry until your staples/sutures are removed. Swelling and discoloration/bruising of this area are expected. This will gradually resolve.

WOUND CARE

- Your dressing may be removed 2-3 days after surgery. However, if you are more comfortable keeping a dressing on your incision site, change it daily or if it becomes wet.
- You may shower anytime after discharge. Sutures need to be covered prior to showering, but staples do not need to be covered. If your incision is draining, you should cover it prior to showering. After showering, gently pat the incision dry.
- No tub baths.
- You should have two pair of TED hose stockings for your legs. These aid in circulation following surgery and should be worn until you are walking at least 30 minutes a day and there is no swelling in your legs. The stockings may be removed twice a day for about 30 minutes each time. Apply a clean pair daily, washing the dirty pair by hand and line drying. This helps to maintain the elasticity in the stockings. Your legs need to be elevated on the bed or couch when reapplying the stockings. You will need help to reapply them.
- Swelling and discoloration/bruising of your back are expected. This will gradually resolve.

PRECAUTIONS

Notify the office if you:

- Develop a temperature greater than 100.5 that is not associated with any other illness. It is not necessary to take your temperature every day. If you feel warm, take your temperature.
- Develop new or more severe pain that cannot be controlled by the pain medication.
- Notice increased swelling, redness, tenderness, or warmth around your incision or you notice drainage or foul odor from your incision.
- Experience changes in sensation to your legs (i.e.: numbness, tingling, etc.). Some of the symptoms you had before surgery may return after surgery as the nerve heals. Remember the source of pressure has been removed and it takes time for the nerve to heal.
- Experience loss of bowel or bladder function.
- Develop calf pain, chest pain, or shortness of breath.
- Have any questions or problems.

MEDICATIONS

- A prescription for pain medication may be given to you by your doctor prior to your discharge from the hospital. These medications are used to reduce your pain ***and must not be taken any more often than prescribed.*** In an effort to keep your pain under good control, you should take the pain medications routinely as prescribed during the first 24-48 hours following surgery. Then, as the pain lessens, begin taking it as needed (within the prescribed guidelines). As you become more comfortable, you may substitute Tylenol for pain control.
- Pain medication should be taken with food as this will help to prevent any stomach upset.
- Requests for pain medication should be made during normal office hours. Please Note: Pain medication will **only** be ordered during regular office hours.
- **Do not drive while taking pain medications.**
- **Do not drink alcoholic beverages while taking pain medications.**
- An ice pack may be applied to your incision areas to help with swelling and pain relief. Do not place the ice pack directly on your skin.
- Do not take any type of anti-inflammatory medication for three months following your surgery.

Over-the-Counter Medications include:

Advil	All Aspirin products	Excedrin	Mediprin
Aleve	All Motrin products	Ibuprofen	Nuprin

Prescription Medications include:

Ansaid	Diclofenac	Meclomen	Nalfon	Tolectin
Arthrotec	Disalcid	Meloxicam	Naprosyn	Trilisate
Bextra	Dolobid	Moboic	Naproxen	Voltaren
Celebrex	Feldene	Monogesic	Orudis	
Clinoril	Indocin	Motrin	Piroxicam	
Daypro	Lodine	Nabumetone	Relafen	

- You may resume your routine medications unless otherwise instructed.

SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP

- After a spinal fusion, usually you are able to safely resume sexual activity in eight weeks. Discuss this further with your doctor.

DRIVING

- After a spinal fusion, usually you are able to resume driving in 8-12 weeks. It is recommended that you not drive while you are still using your brace. Discuss this further with your doctor before driving.
- Avoid long car rides for 3 months following your surgery.
- No driving while you are taking narcotics.

DIET

- After having General Anesthesia, start by taking liquids such as water. If this does not upset your stomach, try soup and crackers. After this, you may resume your normal diet as tolerated.

BOWEL MOVEMENTS

- If you have not had a bowel movement by the time you are ready to be discharged from the hospital, discuss this with the hospital nurse before you go home.
- Surgery, pain medication, and inactivity can cause constipation. Eat high fiber foods (fresh fruits, vegetables, bran) and increase your fluid intake if possible. Also, you may purchase Pericolace, a stool softener, at any pharmacy to aid in alleviating your constipation. Take this two times per day.

FOLLOW UP

- You should be seen in the office for follow up 10-14 days following your surgery. Call the office when you are discharged from the hospital to schedule this appointment. Your follow up appointment will be with one of the clinical staff.
- Our office has a physician available by phone 24 hours a day for emergency orthopaedic needs. Routine questions, including requests for pain medication, are best handled during weekday business hours, Monday through Friday, from 8:00am until 5:00pm.