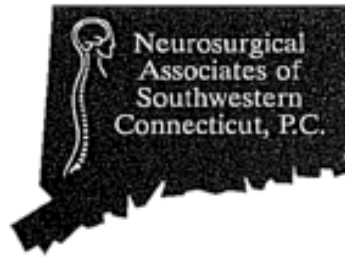


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Post-Operative Instructions Anterior Cervical Spine Surgery

The following is a list of instructions, for your convalescence, following your neck surgery. These represent general instructions to be used as guidelines. They may be modified for an individual patient.

1. The surgical procedure you had may have been performed in conjunction with another surgeon. Post operative questions can be addressed with either surgeon. This team approach leads to better patient care and outcome.
2. Post-operatively, your neck may or may not be supported by a cervical (neck) collar (soft or hard) For a single level fusion, we generally do not use the collar. For a two level fusion, you may wear a soft cervical collar for several weeks. Individual cases may vary. You may wear a hard collar – such as a Miami J or Philadelphia collar. A hard collar will be worn for 4-10 weeks, depending upon the number of levels fused, whether instrumentation was used, and upon how the incision is healing. Your surgeon will advise you.
3. Generally, neck pain following surgery is minimal. You will have some interscapular (between the shoulder blade) muscular discomfort or spasms. 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.
4. You can shower and wash your hair 24 hours following the surgery. It is important to keep the waterproof dressing over the incisions so they do not get wet! There may be times your surgeon uses skin glue and there will be no dressing. If you are wearing a hard collar, the nurses will provide you with a second collar to be worn while showering. Change your collars in front of a mirror to your head and neck still and to ensure you are wearing the collar properly! Depending on your situation, the hard collar may be sometimes removed for showers.
5. If you have dressings, you can remove the dressing by the 5th post-operative day and leave the incision(s) open to air. The suture or stitches we use are absorbable and do not need to be removed. They will dissolve. Other times we use stitches or staples that will have to be removed. If this is the case, you should make an office appointment for 10-14 days after surgery. Occasionally a small piece of dissolvable suture persists; bring this to the attention of your surgeon at your office visit.

6. Your first post-operative visit with your surgeon is usually 2 to 3 weeks after the surgery. If you had a fusion, at that time x-rays will be taken to check the healing of the fusion and placement of the graft and/or instrumentation.
7. You can drive a car with a soft collar on. Usually, it is safe to drive yourself 10 days after the surgery, if your neck feels comfortable. Generally, if you are wearing a hard collar you may NOT drive. You can be a passenger in a car after one week.
8. When to return to work needs to be discussed with your surgeon.
9. You will be discharged with prescriptions for pain medication and/or muscle relaxants. Occasionally, you may need a sleeping pill if it is initially hard to sleep. Please call the office if you are in need of any prescriptions. Please be aware that prescriptions for narcotics will not be provided by a covering (on call) surgeon.
10. Report any increase in post-operative pain, fever, chills, drainage, swelling of the wound, or any redness of the wound immediately. If there is drainage, note the color, amount and consistency. Also call us if you are having headaches. Do not hesitate to call if you have any questions.
11. If you had a fusion you will need to get an X-Ray of your neck prior to your first post-operative visit with your surgeon. A prescription will be included in the surgical packet of information that is mailed to you prior to your surgery.