

Post-Operative Instructions Posterior 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 soft cervical (neck) collar. The soft collar does not need to be worn all the time. Wear your soft collar for comfort or when riding in a car.
3. 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, placed over the back of the neck and shoulders if it is necessary.
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.
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 you have staples, they need to be removed in 10-14 days. You will need to call the office to make an appointment. 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.
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.
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.