Home Care Instructions after
Cervical Laminoplasty Surgery
Orthopedics

Surgery Date: _______________________________________
Doctor: ____________________________________________

This handout will review the care you need to follow once you are home. If you have any questions or concerns, please ask your nurse or doctor. Our staff is here to help you. If you have questions after you are at home, please call the numbers listed at the end of this handout.

Cervical Collar

Your doctor may order a soft collar for you to wear after surgery. It will help support your neck for comfort. If ordered by your doctor, you must wear the soft collar at all times for the first 2 weeks, except when you shower. After 2 weeks, use the collar for comfort as needed. Be aware of safety risks because the collar restricts neck movements and reduces your field of vision.
Bathing with a Soft Collar

You may shower 5 days after surgery. No tub baths for 2 weeks. Remove the collar after you are in the shower. Try to keep the collar dry. When finished bathing, place a clean dressing over the incision if needed. Put the soft collar back on.

Activity

You should slowly increase your activity. In most cases common sense will tell you when you are doing too much. On the other hand, doing too little can delay the return of your strength and stamina. Climbing stairs is okay. Begin the walking program as discussed by your doctor as soon as you leave the hospital.

Sleeping

Sleep either on your back or side with the collar on for the first 2 weeks.

Smoking

We strongly suggest you quit smoking, avoid tobacco products, and second hand smoke. Smoking will delay bone healing. It is best not to smoke for at least 4-6 months after surgery.

Compression Stockings (TEDS)

To improve blood flow and decrease the risk of getting a blood clot, you need to wear elastic stockings (TEDS) until you are walking and back to your normal activities. Remove the TEDS 2 times each day for one hour at a time. You should sleep with them on. You may wash the TEDS with soap and water. Let air dry.

Driving

Do not drive for 2 weeks or while taking narcotic pain medicine. Do not drive until your reflexes return to normal. Check with your doctor before driving.

Note

It is common to have a sore throat or hoarse voice for a few weeks after surgery. You may also feel a “catching” sensation in your throat. You may find lozenges and eating soft foods helps.
If you have any trouble breathing, cannot swallow, or have any major voice changes, call the Spine Clinic right away. Ask to speak with the nurse. After clinic hours, call the doctor on-call. See phone numbers listed.

Limits

- No lifting more than 10 lbs (about 1 gallon of milk) for the first 6 weeks.
- No pushing or pulling.
- No strenuous activities.

Sexual Activity

No sex for 2 weeks. After 2 weeks, you may resume sexual activity, if comfortable.

Incision Care

Proper care of the incision helps to prevent infection.

- Keep the incision clean and dry.
- Change the dressing every other day or as needed. Keep a clean dressing over the incision.
- Check the incision daily to be sure it is clean and dry.
- Check for redness, swelling, or drainage. Some redness and swelling is normal.
- If the incision is closed with staples they will be left in place for 2 weeks. You will come to the Spine Clinic to have the staples removed.
- If the incision is closed with sutures, it will be covered with steri-strips (small pieces of tape) on the skin. These will slowly peel off as they get wet when you shower. You may gently remove them after 10 days.
- A small amount of clear or slightly blood-tinged drainage from the incision is normal.
- **Do not wash directly over the incision.** Wash around the incision gently with soap and water and then let air dry.
- **Do not use any creams, lotions, ointments, or alcohol near or on the incision.**
Temperature

Take your temperature twice a day for 10 days.

Pain Management

You should expect to have quite a bit of pain in your neck muscles. During the healing phase, it is common to have some pain, numbness, tingling, and weakness in your neck or arms.

If you have an increase in pain once you return home, there are many options to decrease the pain.

- Ice the back of the neck for 15-20 minutes each hour for 4 hours. Do not put the ice directly on the skin. Use a pre-made ice pack or put ice in a plastic bag then wrap the ice pack or bag in a towel before you use it.
- Do not sit more than 15 to 30 minutes at a time for the next 48 hours.
- Reduce your activity for the next 48 hours, i.e. walking.
- Take the pain medicine as prescribed by your doctor.
- Do not take Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) for 1 week (i.e. Ibuprofen, Motrin®, Advil® or Aleve®, etc.). These medicines delay bone healing.

If you are not sure about a medicine, please call the Spine Clinic.

Constipation

The combination of surgery, narcotic pain medicine, decreased activity level, and a change in your diet, can play a role in getting constipated. It is common to have a problem with your bowels after surgery. Please see Health Facts for You Constipation from Opioids (Narcotics) found in the Post-Operative Orthopedic Spine Surgery Packet.

When to Call the Doctor

- Increased pain, swelling, or redness in or around the incision area.
- Sudden increase in pain or pain not relieved by medicine.
- An increase in the amount of drainage, change in the color of drainage, or any odor from the incision. Be ready to describe what the drainage looks like, how it smells, and how much there is.
- A temperature above 100.5°F or 38.1°C for 24 hours.
• A “new” chest pain or “new” problem with breathing.
• Redness, warmth, or tenderness in the back of the calf of your leg(s).
• A persistent headache that is different when sitting or lying down.

**Return to Work**

When you return to work will depend on your recovery and the type of work you do. Discuss with your doctor before you return to work.

**Refills**

The Spine Clinic staff will work with you to balance pain medicine, pain management, and activity. The goal is to taper you off of your pain medicine by 6 weeks after surgery. If you need a refill on your pain medicine, call the Spine Clinic and ask for the nurse. Please call when you have a **2 to 3 day supply left** of your medicine. Be ready to give the name and phone number of the drugstore where you want to pick up a refill.

**Future Clinic Visits**

The nursing staff will help you schedule your first clinic visit in 2 weeks if you have staples. For all other patients, your first clinic visit will be scheduled for 6 weeks. All other clinic visits will be as needed.

**Phone Numbers**

If you have questions or concerns, please call the Spine Clinic. Monday through Friday between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM at **(608) 265-3207**.

**Nights and Weekends**, call the paging operator at **(608) 262-0486**. If you live out of the area, call **1(800) 323-8942**. Ask for the “orthopedic resident on call”. Leave your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person’s health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright ©9/2014. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7026.