

Patient Discharge Instructions for Cervical Laminectomy or Cervical Decompression

William F. Lestini, M.D. – Triangle Spine and Back Care Center

These instructions are designed to provide a general outline for you following surgery. For specific questions, please feel free to contact the office. Our office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8:00 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday.

Trip home

- You can ride home lying down in the back seat of a car or sitting in a reclining seat.
- If you lie in the back seat of a car, extra pillows may be of benefit.
- Before you leave the hospital, especially if you have a long ride, please ask for medication.
- During the ride home, plan to stop periodically and stretch your legs or take brief walks.

Medication

- Before you are discharged, we will review all prescriptions with you. Please feel free to ask questions of either myself, the nurse, or physician assistant.
- If you run out of a medication before your return appointment, please contact my office directly for a renewal **during office hours**. Please allow 48 hours for refills due to potential pharmacy or insurance delays. **Prescriptions will not be refilled at night or on weekends.** If you have any problems with any of the medications, do not hesitate to call.
- It is usual to experience some continued neck and arm pain. This should progressively improve. Often, cramping pain or soreness is associated with increasing your activities too rapidly. If this is the case, restricting your activities for a day or so will often help dramatically. If there is a return of severe pain, call my office.

Wound Care and Return Appointment

- Generally, stitches are placed under the skin and will be absorbed by your body. There will be small pieces of adhesive tape superficially, which can be removed in about 14 days. If these become dirty or sticky, they may be removed earlier.
- Sutures or staples may be placed in the skin. **These are removed 10 –14 days after surgery.** If you are coming back to our office to have these removed, your appointment for suture/staple removal should have been made at the time of your surgical scheduling. If there is any question about this date, call the office during business hours and confirm the follow-up appointment.
- You may wish to have your sutures/staples removed closer to home if you live a great distance from our office. A doctor or nurse can do this if arrangements can be made. If so, you will need to schedule an appointment to return to Triangle Spine approximately *six weeks after your surgery*. Please coordinate these plans with the office scheduling secretary.
- **You should keep your incision dry for 5-7 days after surgery.** During this period, you should cover the incision with Tegaderm. You should remove this after showering and cover the incision with a dry sterile dressing. The nurses can show you how to do this while you are in the hospital. After 7 days, if the wound appears well healed, you may begin taking regular showers, using an antibacterial soap. After showering, blot the incision dry with sterile gauze and then cover with a dry sterile dressing. You should typically change the dressing daily for about two weeks. Under no circumstances scratch your incision. Avoid clothes that may rub directly on the incision. Vitamin E cream may be applied to your incision to decrease scarring once it is well healed, usually 3-4 weeks post-surgery.

Wound Care and Return Appointment, continued

- After suture/staple removal, Steri-strips will be applied. The incision should *be kept dry for two days after suture/staple removal*, after which showering (over the strips) can be resumed. The strips can be removed in about seven days, if they haven't fallen off sooner.

Activities

- Plan to gradually resume your normal lifestyle. In general, it is good to progressively increase the amount of time you are walking. Begin with short walks and progressively increase the number of walks and the distance you walk. A progressively increasing walking program is the best overall body toner during the early postoperative period.
- Do not return to work without consulting me first.
- Avoid lifting and cervical exercises until your follow-up appointment.
- Do not drive for 3 weeks. You may ride in a car, but avoid long trips until after you have returned for a follow-up visit.
- Remember that you have just gone through a major operation and avoid activities, which may result in a fall.
- You may wear a soft collar for comfort, but it is not required.
- You may resume sexual activities when this is comfortable for you.
- In general, avoid athletic activities until you have been seen in follow up. If there are any specific questions concerning this, please contact my office.
- At the time of your follow-up appointment, you will be instructed on an exercise program to decrease the chance of further neck problems.
- After surgery, the weight of your shoulders may pull on the incision and cause a burning sensation. If this occurs, you should lay down. This will go away with time. Increase your time up as tolerated, but do not try to push through this pain.

Diet

- Being overweight places a major strain on your spine. I will have instructed you on weight reduction diets during your hospitalization if this is appropriate. Otherwise, resume your regular diet with the addition of roughage, such as fruits or grain, and drink plenty of fluids. The roughage and fruits will help avoid constipation, which may be associated with your medications. You can use an over-the-counter stool softener or laxative, if needed.

I have read this information and all questions have been answered: _____

(Witness)

____/____/____
(Date)

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