



AFTER CERVICAL (NECK) SPINE SURGERY

Your neck is a very important part of your body. Many people experience neck pain during their lifetime. In some cases, however, the neck pain does not resolve and cervical spine surgery is considered. Each person's goal for spine surgery may be different. Generally, the goals range from increasing your strength and function to enabling you to walk, sit and drive a car more easily.

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*All Spine Institute Surgeons are
Board Certified or Board Eligible in Orthopaedic Surgery
Affiliated with the Norton Hospital Leatherman Spine Center*

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The Surgery

The length of your surgery can be from two to four hours, depending on the type of procedure you are having done. After surgery, your body will require a comprehensive rehabilitation period to strengthen weakened muscles and soft tissue.

Your Hospital Stay

The type of cervical procedure that is performed will determine how long you will need to stay in the hospital and how much assistance you may need after surgery. Typically, you will be in the hospital for one to three days. Some procedures may allow you to go home the next day.

The day after surgery is considered day one.

Activity

On the night of or the day after surgery, or post-operative day one, patients are encouraged to sit and walk with assistance in a manner that avoids injury. It is important to build up gradually to avoid a flare-up of symptoms. You should be walking more comfortably and climbing stairs by the time you are released from the hospital. You may shower on post-op day two.

Treatments

To help expand your lungs and prevent pneumonia, you may have an incentive spirometer, which is a blue tube attached to an air chamber. This device works by placing the end of the tube in your mouth and drawing your air through it. The objective is to keep the blue box located in the air chamber at a constant height and not fluctuating up and down. This device works on inspiration (breathing in), not expiration (breathing out), helping to increase expansion of the lungs and move secretions through them. Your nurse or respiratory therapist will review this with you in the hospital.

It is common to continue intravenous (IV) fluids for one day after surgery.



Diet

Your physician will order your diet. Recovery from anesthesia varies from person to person, so your diet will be adjusted as your intestinal function returns to normal. Typically, you will be given clear liquids as soon as you are able to eat. If you tolerate the clear liquids, your diet will be progressed.

Medication

Antibiotics are given through your IV for 24 to 48 hours to help fight infection. Pain medication is available to ensure your comfort and may be given by mouth, injection or through your IV. If you are uncomfortable, please let your nurse know. It is important to try and maintain your pain at a manageable level so that you may continue to progress with your activities.

Neck Brace

Your doctor may ask you to wear a neck brace after surgery. The decision to have you wear a brace is based on the extent of your surgery and the quality of bone graft. Remember to wear your brace at all times, with the exception of when you are in the shower.

Incision Care

Please try to keep your incision clean. Do not scrub it in the shower or stand in the shower with the water stream pulsating directly on the incision area. There is no need to keep a dressing over the incision. If steri-strips are in place, they will fall off by themselves when ready, usually in seven to ten days. If the edges start to curl up, cut the edges off.

Notify your physician if any yellowish drainage, significant redness or swelling occurs at the incision site. Also be sure to notify your physician if you develop a fever of 101 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, if you have a dramatic increase in pain, or you notice a new numbness and tingling in your arms or legs.



Your Post-Operative Period

Attention to appropriate post-operative care is critical in leading to a successful neck surgery. Read the following carefully, and remember to ask any questions that you may have.

The First Two Weeks

It is important to take short walks during the day, possibly during the mid-morning, afternoon and evening hours. Increase your walking exercise to 15 to 20 minute intervals by the end of the second week. You may climb stairs slowly, one at a time. You may also begin riding in an automobile up to 20 minutes per day the second week, but do not drive until you have been released to do so by your doctor (usually at the first follow-up office visit).

Avoid sudden, extensive movements of your neck. An ache in your shoulders is common; do a shoulder shrug movement and take advantage of hot showers to relax the area. It is safe to resume sexual activity when it is comfortable for you. Do not lift anything over ten pounds. You may lift from the waist, as you would when pulling a gallon of milk from the refrigerator to the counter. Do not lift from the ground up. Refrain from forceful pushing or pulling, such as vacuuming or mowing the lawn. If your brace becomes uncomfortable, please call our office to discuss a brace adjustment.

The Third and Fourth Weeks

Increase your walking exercise to 30 to 40 minutes, two to three times a day. It is important to continue to gradually increase your activity.

The First Check-Up After Surgery

Please call the office the next business day after you are released from the hospital to schedule your follow-up appointment. You will need to be seen within four to six weeks. This is also the time when medications will be refilled.

Our office telephone number is (502) 584-7525, and our hours are Monday through Friday from 8:15 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.

This brochure is not a substitute for medical care. It has been developed by your physician to help you better understand your spine condition, surgery and post-operative instructions. Please be advised that the statements made within this brochure are intended for general information use only. Your condition or course of treatment may vary. Please check with your physician for variances.