Duke Raleigh Hospital
DUKE UNIVERSITY HEALTH SYSTEM

Duke Neurosurgery Discharge Instructions

These are instructions for your care following:
Brain Surgery with **Dr. Grossi**

Diet:
- You may resume your normal diet, although you may be more comfortable at first eating softer foods such as mashed potatoes and ice cream.
- You can help avoid constipation by eating a balanced diet including: fruits, vegetables, and whole grains (like multi-grain bread, cereals, and bran muffins).

Activity:
- Walk at least three times a day and gradually increase your distance and light activities each day.
- Do not exercise other than walking until after your first 6 week office visit.
- Do not return to the gym, play golf, swim, run, mow grass until 3 months after surgery.
- Avoid exercises like aerobics, heavy house cleaning and lifting over 5-10 pounds (a gallon of milk weighs 8.5 pounds).
- Use your incentive spirometer 10 times every hour that you are awake.
- Do not drive if you are taking pain medications, muscle relaxants, or if you are in pain.
- You may resume sexual activity when this is comfortable for you.
- You can return to work when you feel ready. However, you must stay within the 5-10 pound weight lifting restriction – half days might be better at first.
- Do not drive 1-2 weeks after surgery.
- **You may not drive for six months if you have had a seizure by North Carolina state law.**

Wound Care:
- Your incision is closed with staples or stitches.
- You may remove the dressing after 2 days after surgery. If there is still a small amount of bloody drainage, you can place a new sterile gauze dressing, otherwise you can leave the wound open to air
- You may shower **three days after surgery**, but do not soak the incision in a bathtub or pool for 4 weeks.
- After showering, dry the wound, and apply a light covering of Neosporin or Bacitracin antibiotic ointment to the wound.

Pain/ Post operative symptoms:
- You will have some pain at the incision and soreness of the muscles of the neck and skull. This is normal and will improve with time.
- You may have headaches from swelling over the next 2 weeks, these headaches should improve with time. Pain medications and steroids will be helpful.
- Some pain is normal as you resume your daily activities. You will tire more easily for several months after surgery.
- You may still have problems with speech, memory, concentration or motor movement and sensation. This may result from the under lying brain disorder, and may temporarily worsen post-operatively as the brain swells. The steroid medications prescribed help to decrease this swelling.
- There is a risk of seizures after brain surgery. This is the result of irritation of the brain from surgery. For this reason we may prescribe an anti-seizure medication such as Dilantin or Keppra for you to take post-operatively. If you were on an anti-seizure medicine before surgery, you should continue to take this medication unless told otherwise.

Medication:

- Take all of your medications as ordered. You do not have to take pain medication unless it is needed. It is important that you are able to cough, breathe deeply, and be comfortable enough to walk.
- Do not use alcohol while taking pain medication.
- Medications that may be prescribed include:
  - pain medication such as Percocet or Vicodin
  - an over the counter stool softener for constipation (try Dulcolax, Milk of Magnesia or Correctal at first and Magnesium Citrate or Fleets enema if needed) – anesthesia and pain medication may cause constipation
  - an antiseizure medication such as Keppra (levetiracetam) or Dilantin (phenytoin)- you should continue to take these as prescribed at least until your follow-up appointment.
  - Steroids such as Decadron (dexamethasone)- you should take these as instructed (usually tapering off)- as these help with brain swelling.
  - Antiacid medication – such as Zantac or Axid or Protonix- you should take this while taking the steroid medications to protect your stomach.
- Notify the office if you need refills before your return appointment.

Questions/Concerns:

Call the doctor at (919) 862-5650 if you have:

- a temperature of 101°F or above
- increased redness, soreness, swelling or foul-smelling drainage from the incision
- Clear drainage from the incision or significant swelling or "bogginess" under the incision.
- inadequate pain relief
- nausea or vomiting
- shortness of breath
- Seizures
- Significant worsening of your speech, mental status, strength, vision, or sensation
- pain in your calf
- any other concerns

Follow Up:

An appointment has been made for you in the clinic after surgery on

_____ at _____.

☐ You also have an appointment with:

_____ on _____ at _____.

Call our office for any concerns you may have at (919) 862-5650