

Duke Neurosurgery Discharge Instructions

These are instructions for your care following:

Cervical (Neck) Spine 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).
- You may also take fiber supplements and over-the-counter stool softeners or laxatives such as Colace or Dulcolax

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 sit longer than one hour at a time for the first two weeks – get up and move around.
- Avoid twisting, turning, stopping, bending or reaching over your head for six weeks.
- 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).
- Do your breathing exercises every two hours.
- 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.

Cervical Spine patients:

- You may be asked to wear a hard cervical collar. If so, you should wear the collar at all times until your follow-up visit.
- If you are given a soft cervical collar, you may wear this for comfort, but may remove the collar if it is bothering you.
- Do not drive as long as you are wearing your collar. You must also have adequate range of motion to safely drive.



Wound Care:

- For **anterior** (front of neck) procedures, the incision is closed with dissolvable stitches under the skin and skin glue.
 - You may shower **three days after surgery**, but do not soak the incision in a bathtub or pool for 4 weeks.
 - You do not have to have any stitches removed. There will be a small amount of surgical glue on the incision. You may peel off the leftover glue after 1 week if it is still attached.
- For **posterior** (back of neck) procedures, the 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:

- The second day after surgery will be the most painful due to swelling and the anesthetic wearing off.
- Around the fifth week after surgery, you may experience discomfort for a few days due to scar tissue forming.
- You may also have some pain, numbness and tingling in your arms for the first 6-8 weeks as normal nerve function returns.
- Some pain is normal as you resume your daily activities. You may tire more easily for several months after surgery.

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
 - You may use throat sprays or drops such as Cepacol for throat discomfort
 - For posterior neck surgery, you may be prescribed a muscle relaxant such as Robaxin, Baclofen or Valium. Take these as needed for muscle spasm. They will make you sleepy, so do not drive while taking these medications
- 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
- inadequate pain relief
- nausea or vomiting
- shortness of breath
- severe difficulty swallowing liquids
- pain in your calf
- any other concerns

Follow Up:

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

_____ at _____.

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