

## **Duke Neurosurgery Discharge Instructions**

These are instructions for your care following:

### **Lumbar (Low Back) Spine Surgery with Dr. Grossi**

#### **Diet:**

- You may resume your normal diet.
- 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.
- You will be more comfortable reclining in an easy chair or on pillows in bed than sitting upright.
- 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.

#### **Lumbar Spine patients:**

- Do not drive 1-2 weeks after surgery.
- Do not ride in the car longer than one hour at a time – get out to stretch your back each hour.
- You may be asked to wear a lumbar corset. If so, you should wear the collar at all times until your follow-up visit. This gives your back support while the muscles are healing and reminds you not to bend or twist. You should wear it during the day but not in bed at night or if getting up to use the bathroom. You may want to continue to wear the corset when doing yard work or riding in the long distances after your recovery from surgery.



#### **Wound Care:**

- Your 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.
- Your incision was 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, and increased muscle spasms as the lower back muscles begin to heal.
- You may also experience some back pain from muscle spasm as you increase your daily activity. This is to be expected and will improve with time.
- 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 the legs and feet 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
  - 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
  - You may be prescribed an anti-inflammatory medication such as Celebrex or Ibuprofen. Take these as prescribed on a regular basis to reduce inflammation and pain
  - 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
- 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
- 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