

Kuether Brain and Spine

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Discharge instructions for cervical fusion surgery

Please note: These are general guidelines and helpful suggestions for your post-operative recovery

period. Everyone progresses at their own individual pace.

Medications:

- a. Resume all previous medications unless instructed otherwise.
- b. Pain medications as prescribed. Take only as needed.
- c. Muscle relaxants as prescribed. Take only as needed.
- d. NO over-the-counter anti-inflammatory such as Advil (ibuprofen), Aleve (naproxen), or aspirin (81mg baby aspirin is ok) for a minimum of 6 months; unless directed by your surgeon. Studies have shown that non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDS) may slow or stop bone formation and may inhibit the fusion process.

e. NEVER DRIVE OR OPERATE MACHINERY UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF NARCOTIC PAIN RELIEVERS OR MUSCLE RELAXANTS.

Activities:

- a. Walking is the best exercise after surgery.
- b. No lifting, pushing, pulling, overhead lifting greater than 10 pounds.
- c. No driving for 2-3 weeks.
- d. If your doctor has prescribed a cervical collar for you to wear, please wear it at all times except while in bed and bathing.
- e. Please avoid hyperflexion, hyperextension, and extremes in range of motion of your head and neck.
- f. Your energy level will be decreased for several weeks following surgery.
- g. Be careful to avoid sudden movements and use good body mechanics.

Discharge instructions for cervical fusion surgery (continued)

Diet:

- a. Your appetite may be decreased. It may help to eat smaller, more frequent meals.
- b. Your surgery and narcotic pain medications may cause constipation. If you need a laxative, try 1-2 tablespoons of Metamucil per day, and/or a tablespoon of milk of magnesia in the morning, drink lots of water. Remember to eat fiber, fresh vegetables, prunes, and fresh fruit.

Care of incision:

- a. Please keep the incision area clean and dry. Do not peel off scabs.
- b. If dressing is placed, please keep dressing on for the time period as directed on your discharge paperwork. If no time period is mentioned, please see below in section c.
- c. Please change dressing 1-2x per day until drainage stops, then leave incision uncovered except during bathing.
- d. Do not submerge the incision in a bath tub, hot tub, or swimming pool for 4 weeks.
- e. Cover the incision for showering for 2 days following surgery.
- f. Remove steri-strips (if placed) after the 10th post-operative day. Do not worry if they fall off earlier.
- g. Unless directed, no ointments (such as Neosporin) on the incision.
- h. You may notice some numbness and swelling around your incision which is normal. This should gradually decrease.
- i. If you notice increased swelling, redness, and/or drainage from the incision, please call the office.

Additional instructions:

- a. If you have not already set up your post-operative appointment, please call the office when you get home to schedule your appointment. Your discharge paperwork should have instructions on it when you need to follow-up with your doctor's office.
- b. Medications are renewed only between the hours of 8:30 to 12:30 and 1:30pm-4:00pm, Monday thru Thursday, and 8:30am-12:30 on Friday. Please allow 2 business days for refill requests.
- c. No medications will be renewed during the weekends or after hours. No exceptions. Plan ahead.
- d. **NO SMOKING.** Studies have shown that smoking may inhibit fusion.
- e. If you have any questions or concerns, please call our office at 503-489-8111.

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Management of Constipation

Constipation is a common problem associated with the use of narcotic pain medications, dehydration, and lack of activity. Management of this problem can be very straightforward if taken care of right away.

BASIC CARE:

- a. Stay well hydrated (6-8 8 ounce glasses of water or other liquids a day)
- b. Eat a high fiber diet. Fruits and especially vegetables are very important. Grains such as bran fiber or whole wheat or oats can be helpful. Aim for 15-30 grams of dietary fiber per day.
- c. Walk often as tolerated.
- d. Reduce narcotic use as tolerated.

RELIEF OF CONSTIPATION:

If constipation does occur, there are several ways to deal with it, such as prune juice, dried fruits, etc. If something more is needed, a dose or two of milk of magnesia may work.

For continued constipation: try Magnesium Citrate. This is found over the counter at most grocery stores and pharmacies. It comes in a bottle and often looks like generic soda. Drink half of a bottle at a time, and for no results in half an hour drink another half bottle. May repeat for 2 bottles in 24 hours.

If still constipated, see below:

Items Needed:

1 quart of Gatorade, Miralax 14 dose bottle, and two Dulcolax laxative 5mg tablets.

- a. Mix half of the Miralax in the quart of Gatorade.
- b. Take two 5mg Dulcolax laxative tablets.
- c. Wait ½ hour, then start drinking the Gatorade/Miralax mixture. Drink 1 glassful every 20 minutes until gone.
- d. You may repeat this regimen again, but it would be unlikely that you will remain constipated with two rounds of this cocktail. Remember, this may cause dehydration due to diarrhea, so drink fluids as needed.