



## Neurosurgical Associates of Southwestern CT

BRAIN & SPINE SPECIALISTS

### Post-Operative Instructions - Posterior Cervical Spine Surgery

The following is a list of instructions, for your convalescence following your neck surgery. These represent general instructions to be used as guidelines. They may be modified for an individual patient.

1. The surgical procedure you had was performed in conjunction with another surgeon. Post-operative questions can be addressed with either surgeon. This team approach leads to better patient care and outcome.
2. In most cases, your surgery will not require a cervical (neck) collar. If a soft collar is given, this will be worn for comfort only
3. You will have post-operative pain. Surgery on the back of the neck can be quite uncomfortable for several days after surgery. Ice is generally very helpful, placed over the back of the neck and shoulders.
4. You can shower and wash your hair 24 hours following the surgery. It is important to keep the waterproof dressing over the incisions so they do not get wet.
5. You can remove the dressing by the 5th post-operative day and leave the incision open to air.
6. Sometimes the suture or stitches we use are absorbable and do not need to be removed. If you have staples or visible sutures, they need to be removed in 10-14 days. This may be earlier than your scheduled post-op office visit. You will need to call the office to make an appointment. Occasionally a small piece of suture persists, bring this to the attention of your surgeon at your office visit.
7. Your first post-operative visit with your surgeon or physician assistant is usually 2 weeks after the surgery.
8. It is safe to drive yourself 10-14 days after the surgery, if your neck feels comfortable
9. Return to work needs to be discussed at your post-operative visit. It usually occurs between the 3rd and 4<sup>th</sup> week following your operation.
10. Medications may include pain relievers and analgesics to control pain, although they may cause drowsiness and constipation. They may also be habit forming and you may want to consider the amount of pain medication you are taking. You may also consider taking multivitamins with

iron on a daily basis for a few weeks post-operatively. This may also make you constipated, so you should consider taking an over the counter stool softener and laxative.

11. Constipation is a common side effect of some pain medications so it is important to drink plenty of liquids and eat a diet high in fiber. You may need to take a stool softener for a short time while taking pain medication, but avoid strong laxatives. Consider Milk of Magnesia, Metamucil, Fibercon, Citrucel or other mild laxatives.
12. Please call the office if you are in need of any prescription refills. Be sure to call during business hours on Monday through Friday from 9am to 5pm. Prescription renewal by phone may require 48 hours to refill. Please be aware that prescriptions for narcotics will not be provided by a covering (on-call) surgeon
13. Report any increase in post-operative pain, fever, chills, drainage, swelling of the wound, or any redness of the wound immediately. If there is drainage, note the color, amount and consistency. Also call us if you are having headaches. Do not hesitate to call if you have any questions.
14. **CAUTION:** It is well known that smoking severely slows down the healing process for all post-operative patients. Nicotine can adversely affect the rate of fusion and recurrent disc herniation.