

HOME CARE AFTER CERVICAL SPINAL FUSION/CERVICAL DISC REPLACEMENT

ACTIVITY

You need to give your body time to heal after this operation; however, you should not stay completely inactive. You should be out of bed and ambulating to promote healing and reduce the risk of secondary medical issues such as blood clots. Below is a list of activities you should follow.

1. Most often you do not need a neck brace after surgery. In rare instances and depending on the extent of your surgery, you may be given a neck brace after surgery. You will be given the brace prior to leaving the hospital if it is needed. Dr. Mazahery will direct you on when you must wear the brace. If given a brace, most commonly you will wear the brace for the majority of the day and when sleeping for the first two weeks after surgery. You may remove the brace for short periods of time when resting and you may remove the brace to shower. There are **rare instances** when the brace must be **worn at all times**, even when showering, and your surgeon will advise you of this. You cannot drive while wearing this brace.
2. No **sports activity** except for walking for the first two weeks after surgery. Try to **avoid sweating** in the area of the incision to reduce risk of infection. (Note: There are no limits on stair climbing or sitting. Use your comfort level as an indicator of the length of time you are able to sit or climb stairs. Generally a person is comfortable **sitting** about 1 hour before a change in position or activity is needed).
3. It is important to stay mobile after surgery. Below is a general **walking program** that is recommended.
Day 1 (at home): Walk 1 block in the morning and 1 block in the afternoon/evening.
After Day 1: Increase your distance 1 block per day as long as it is comfortable. You should be walking 1-2 miles per day when you return for your next visit.
4. **Sleep** in any position as comfortable (including side, back, or stomach).



LIMITATIONS

- No **driving** while on narcotics or if you were given a neck brace to wear.
- No **lifting** more than 5 pounds (about a gallon of milk) for the first 2 weeks after surgery. No lifting more than 25 pounds for an additional 4 weeks (six weeks total).
- No sexual activity for the first week after surgery, after that as comfortable.

INCISION CARE

Caring for your incision at home is important to prevent infection. Please follow the steps below on incision care:

- If you have a dressing over your incision, **you may remove it when you are home.**
- When you are home, it is preferred that you leave the incision open to air. You may cover the incision with a bandage if this is more comfortable, however you need to change the dressing once a day.
- Your incision has been closed with suture material under the skin and covered with steri-strips (small pieces of surgical tape) on the skin. The steri-strips will gradually peel off as they get wet when you take a shower. This is normal and expected.
- You may **shower** 3 days after surgery. No direct water pressure on the incision, but water can roll over the incision. Pat incision dry with a clean towel.

PAIN MANAGEMENT AT HOME

It is normal after surgery to have occasional pain, numbness, or tingling in your neck or arms. To reduce the pain, there are several approaches to try:

- Take the pain medicine as directed by your doctor.
- You can utilize Tylenol (as long as Tylenol/acetaminophen is not a component of your narcotic medication) to supplement your pain control if needed. You can also utilize non-steroidal anti-inflammatories, such as Advil/Aleve/Ibuprofen, to help reduce inflammation and assist with pain control. Do not exceed the recommended daily dosage of these medications.



PAIN MANAGEMENT AT HOME

Narcotic pain medication causes constipation. Eat plenty of foods with roughage (bran, oat, fruit, applesauce) and drink a lot of fluids, especially prune juice to prevent constipation. You can also take over the counter stool softeners such as Colace as needed.

You will be given a prescription for pain medication after your surgery. We anticipate you will no longer require narcotic pain medications 1-2 weeks post operatively.

CALL YOUR DOCTOR IF YOU HAVE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING

1. A temperature of 101 F (38.3 C) or greater on 2 readings taken 4 hours apart
2. An increase in pain, redness or swelling around your incision.
3. Drainage from your incision.
4. Increasing difficulty breathing or swallowing
5. Develop difficulty urinating or controlling your bowel movements.
6. Increased swelling in your ankles or feet.
7. Increasing weakness of your arms or legs.
8. Redness, warmth and tenderness on the back of the calf of your leg(s).

FUTURE FOLLOW-UP VISITS

1st post operative appointment: This usually occurs 1 to 2 weeks after your surgery date. **Call Dr. Mazahery's office to confirm the date and time** of your post operative appointment. **703-810-5202**

RETURN TO WORK

Your return to work will depend on your recovery and the type of work you do. You must discuss this with your doctor before you return to work

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Dr. Mazahery's office (703) 810-5202, Monday through Friday 8:30am-5:00pm

For emergencies on nights and weekends, please call (703) 810-5202 and have the on call provider paged. You will need to leave your number and the doctor will call you back shortly.