



NEUROSURGICAL ASSOCIATES, LTD.

SPINE SURGERY POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

General Information:

Our telephone hours are 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. If you are experiencing difficulties or have questions, please call during business hours.

Mild redness or swelling around the incision may be normal. Call our office if you have increased redness, swelling, persistent drainage, your incision becomes more painful or if you should develop a fever greater than 101.0 that lasts longer than two hours.

It is also common to experience temporary increase or return of limb pain and/or altered sensation during the first two weeks of recovery.

If you have not scheduled your post-operative appointment yet, please call our office to schedule it.

Pain and pain medications:

Pain is to be expected after surgery. Following surgery, you will be sent home with pain medication to keep you comfortable. You may also be given a medication for muscle spasms or tightness. It is important to take your prescriptions as prescribed. If you feel that your pain is not well controlled, call our office during business hours to talk to our providers. Do not take your medication more often than prescribed. Avoid alcoholic beverages while taking pain medications.

You can use ice to areas of pain as needed, 20 minutes at a time. Changing positions periodically may also help (i.e., sit/stand/walk/recline).

Some narcotics may be phoned to your pharmacy and some cannot. Those narcotic prescriptions that cannot be phoned will either be given to you in clinic, mailed to your pharmacy or you may pick up the written prescription at our office. We will not mail any prescriptions to your home. Please plan appropriately if you choose to have your prescription mailed to your pharmacy. We require at least two business days' notice to refill any prescription. If someone else besides you picks up your prescriptions, we must be informed who will be coming in advance. In addition, that person must present photo I.D. before picking up your written prescription. **We do not refill or prescribe any medications after hours or on the weekends.**

Nausea is a common side effect of pain medications. We recommend that you take your pain medication with food.

Some medications need to be avoided for three months following a fusion, i.e., Advil, Motrin, ibuprofen, Celebrex, Aleve and Naprosyn. Please check with your neurosurgical provider before resuming these medications.

Bowel care:

Constipation is common following a surgery due to decreased fluid intake, pain medications and inactivity. Drink plenty of water or fluid and eat high fiber foods during your recovery. Excessive milk products such as cheese, yogurt and milk may contribute to constipation. Getting up and moving after surgery will help keep your bowels moving. If it has been several days since you had a bowel movement after surgery, we recommend prune juice, over-the-counter stool softeners or suppositories until your bowels become more regular.

Driving:

You may not drive while taking narcotic pain medications or medications that may cause increased drowsiness. Driving under the influence of controlled substances renders you incapable of driving safely. Please check with your provider when you would be able to start driving.

If you had a cervical fusion, you will be restricted from twisting your neck which will prevent you from driving safely. Ask your provider when you can drive.

You may take short trips but stop frequently to walk and change positions. Avoid prolonged sitting.

Activity

Resume activities gradually. Do not over exert yourself.

You are encouraged to walk. Start with short walks 5-10 minutes at a time 4-5 times per day and increase as tolerated. Some days you will have more energy than others. This is normal. You may climb stairs as tolerated; we recommend you use the railing.

After surgery, you may be limited in regard to flexing or extending your back or neck. Further directions will come at discharge if necessary.

Do not lift or carry anything heavier than 10 pounds, which is approximately equal to one gallon of milk. No housework, vacuuming, laundry, leaf raking, lawn mowing or snow shoveling.

We recommend that you abstain from sexual activity until you can do so without pain and maintain your spine in a neutral, well-supported position.

Shower/Bathing:

If your incision is closed with glue, you may get your incision wet but do not rub on the incision or soak in a tub or whirlpool until seen in clinic.

If your incision is closed with staples or sutures, keep the incision(s) dry until the staples or sutures are removed. If you shower, you may cover the incision with plastic wrap such as Press and Seal or Saran Wrap and tape. Once you are done showering, remove the plastic, pat dry and leave the incision open to air. Do not rub on the incision or soak in a tub or whirlpool until seen in clinic.

If your incision is closed with Steri-Strips, keep your incision dry for three days. If you shower, you may cover the incision with plastic wrap such as Press and Seal or Saran Wrap and tape. Once you are done showering, remove the plastic, pat dry and leave the incision open to air. You may remove the Steri-Strips in two weeks if they have not fallen off. Do not rub on the incision or soak in a tub or whirlpool until seen in clinic.

Do not use lotions, gels or ointments on the incision until your incision is fully healed.

Nutrition:

Your diet restrictions will not change with your surgery. Eat plenty of high fiber foods and drink plenty of fluids. We recommend drinking six to eight glasses of water per day, unless you have a fluid restriction.

Smoking:

For proper healing, it is highly recommended and often required that you stop using all tobacco products. This includes smoking, chewing, nicotine gum and nicotine patches.

Call our office during business hours if the following occurs:

- Persistent drainage from your incision
- Increased pain, redness or swelling of your incision
- Temperature greater than 101.0 lasting longer than two hours
- New leg pain or swelling
- New unrelieved headaches

If you experience any of the following, please proceed to Abbott Northwestern Emergency Room or the nearest Emergency Room:

- Chest pain or shortness of breath
- Worsening swallowing problems or difficulty breathing.
- Increased swelling of the neck
- Uncontrollable pain warranting further evaluation