

Discharge instructions: Back surgery

Pain control

- Typically, we will prescribe a narcotic for the immediate post-operative period to control pain.
 - In most cases, 1-2 tablets taken every 4 hours is sufficient for relief.
 - Most patients need this only for the first two weeks following surgery.
 - You should reduce or discontinue this medication as pain decreases.
- These medications contain a large dose of Tylenol. Therefore, you should not take additional Tylenol at the same time.
- Do not take non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications, such as ibuprofen, naproxen or aspirin, for 3 months following surgery as these medications may block proper bone healing.

Constipation

- Pain medicines and anesthesia can be very constipating. If you experience constipation you can try any or all of the following:
 - Gentle physical activity.
 - Drinking plenty of fluids.
 - Taking over-the-counter stool softeners or laxatives, such as milk of magnesia or Dulcolax.

Activity restrictions

- No bending, twisting or lifting at the waist; you may squat if you need to pick up something on the floor.
- Follow any back precautions as instructed to you by your physical and/or occupational therapist.
- Do not drive while on pain medication.
- No smoking.
- Avoid strenuous exercise.
- Avoid heavy lifting.
- No heavy housework for one month.
- Bed rest may **slow** your recovery.
 - Walking is the best exercise and daily walking is strongly recommended.
 - Gradually increase the length and distance of your walks.
 - We suggest starting inside your home, then continuing out and around the yard as tolerated and progressing to short walks in your neighborhood or shopping mall.
 - Once you are able to walk without difficulty, you may drive.
 - Try to limit the length of time traveling by car for the first 6 weeks.

Incision care

- The outer dressings can be removed on the 3rd day after your surgery, at which time your incision can be left uncovered.
- Do not apply lotions or cream to incisions.
- Steri-Strips will cover the incision(s) and will begin to fall off in approximately 7-10 days.
 - If they have not fallen off in 2 weeks, you may remove them.
- You may begin showering 3 days after surgery.
 - Although you may shower, **do not** sit in a bath.
 - After showering pat area dry; **do not** rub the incision.

Warning signs

Please call your physician immediately at (804) 828-9165 if you experience the following:

- Constant bleeding from the incision that will not stop after applying direct pressure for 10 minutes.
- If your incision develops redness or swelling, or a change in wound drainage, such as an increase in amount, a foul order or change in color.
- Change in mental status, such as unusual behavior, confusion and difficulty walking.
- A temperature of more than 101.5 degrees Fahrenheit.

Follow up

- Please call the office your first week home to report your progress.
- If a post-operative appointment was not scheduled prior to your surgery, please call the office within 48 hours of being discharged to schedule your first post-operative visit.
- Your estimated return to work will be determined between you and your physician, but you should expect to be out of work for an average of 4-6 weeks or more.

Please call us at (804) 828-9165 with any questions or concerns.