



## Ryan J. Hoel, MD

Care Coordinator Phone: 952-456-7423

### Care After a Cervical Discectomy and Fusion

The following information will help your recovery at home.

#### PAIN:

- It is normal for you to experience some pain in the area of your incision after your surgery. Some of your arm pain may go away immediately after your surgery. Some of the pain will gradually decrease over the next few days or weeks.
- It normal to experience soreness/pain between your shoulder blades and in your upper back following surgery. This is a result of stretching of the ligaments of the spine and will resolve gradually. It is common to experience a sore throat and a “lump” sensation in your throat. This usually lasts for less than 2 weeks.
- You should call Dr. Hoel’s office if your arm pain returns suddenly and does not improve over 24 hours.

#### ACTIVITY:

- You may increase your activity as tolerated; walking is the best form of exercise after spine surgery.
- Avoid full range of motion of your neck, you may move your head normally but do not force your neck. Your motion will come back slowly.
- You may return to work approximately 1-2 weeks after your surgery. If you need a note to return or are unable to return to work, please contact Dr. Hoel’s office, 952-456-7423.
- You will be discharged with a soft cervical collar; you must wear your collar when you are in the car and when you are in any situation where you may not have full control over your neck. Otherwise you may wear it or remove it as needed for comfort.
- Walking stimulates the healing process. Dr. Hoel wants you to accomplish a minimum of 45 minutes of **sustained** walking per day for exercise. You are encouraged to walk several times a day and there is no limit on how far you can walk. In the beginning you may only be able to walk 5-15 minutes at a time. That is okay, just do this a minimum of 4-10x/day.

#### DRIVING:

- You may drive if you feel strong enough, when you feel you have enough motion in your neck that it is safe and you are not taking narcotic pain medication.

## INCISION SITE:

- You may shower without covering your incision, allow water and soap to run over your incision but do not scrub the area or soak in a tub.
- Your incision is covered with a sterile dressing. This may be removed after 5 days, no dressing is needed after that.
- Your stitches are dissolvable and do not need to be removed.

## PAIN MANAGEMENT:

- Take your prescribed pain medication as needed and directed. Use Tylenol for your discomfort when you no longer need the narcotic pain medication. DO NOT take Ibuprofen, Aleve, Motrin and Advil or any other anti-inflammatory as they may affect the healing of the bone graft.
- If you need a refill on your pain medication call 952-456-7423, please allow 24 hours for your prescription to be refilled, Dr. Hoel's office does not refill pain medications on Friday afternoons.

## FOLLOW-UP VISITS:

- You should have a post-op appointment that was scheduled for you at the same time your surgery was scheduled. If you do not please call Dr. Hoel's office as soon as you get home.
- Write down any questions you have about your surgery, recovery, return to work and other topics you wish to be covered at your post-op visit. This way, we will be able to address all of your questions at your next visit.
- Call your doctor if you have any questions or concerns.

## WHEN TO CALL YOUR DOCTOR:

- If you have any redness, warmth or swelling at the incision site
- If your incision opens up
- If you have increasing drainage from your incision
- If you have a temperature greater than 100.5 degrees Fahrenheit
- If you are having difficulty breathing or if swallowing is becoming so difficult that you can't swallow liquids or small pills, go directly to the emergency department at the closest hospital (ideally Fairview Southdale) or call an ambulance to take you there.