

Instructions after Cervical Decompression and Fusion

First two weeks: Keep collar on at all times until morning of third day after the surgery. Now, you can shower without the collar, but keep your head level. Leave the dressing in place. Take quick 5-minute shower without moving your head. Have someone gently pat dry your hair and towel-off the rest of your body. Once you are dry, sit straight on a firm chair. Someone else can now peel off the dressing on your neck. Steri-strips will be covering the wound. **DO NOT REMOVE THE STERI-STRIPS.** Put new gauze over the steri-strips and apply a new sticky, clear dressing to hold the gauze. Then, put the collar back on. If you have a pelvic dressing, then stand and have someone change that dressing like the one on the neck. Wait two days before changing dressing and showering again. Repeat this schedule until you see back in the office.

First four weeks:

1. Minimize riding in a car, travel during non-busy times and routes to decrease risk of being in a car accident. Absolutely no driving while wearing a collar.
2. No sexual relations.
3. No tub baths.
4. Wear cervical collar.

First three months:

1. Take it easy. You can walk around as much as you like. You can do simple things for yourself, such as feeding yourself, preparing simple meals, and dressing yourself. Wear the collar at all times. The collar is reminder for you to keep your head still, level, and looking straight. The collar will not keep your head absolutely still; you must do that.
2. Keep collar on at all times, except for brief moments to clean your neck. Usually we will be able to discontinue use of collar after four weeks, depending on bony healing.
3. Remember not to bend your head down when you are doing simple activities. You can look down with your eyes, but not with your head. Turn by turning your body, not your head.
4. Use only one small pillow behind your head when lying down.

Signs and Symptoms to Watch for:

1. Any increase in swelling or redness around the wound.
2. Any cloudy, foul-smelling, or reddish drainage from the wound.
3. Any new numbness, tingling, or weakness in the leg, foot, or toes.
4. Any temperature over 100 degrees F.

If any of these conditions occur or if you have any question, contact my office at: 708-799-2911 or 219-836-4955.

Miscellaneous:

1. Some pain in neck is expected. If you had bone graft surgery, the pelvis will hurt more, but gradually it will get better. You should note gradual improvement in the pain and sensation in the arms and hands.

2. Do not do any exercise program right after surgery unless prescribed by me. Depending on your condition, you may or may not need physical therapy after the surgery.
3. As you heal and recover, your activity restrictions will gradually lessen. Do not try to do too much within the first few weeks of surgery. When appropriate, we will discuss your return to work and if restrictions are needed.
4. As the surgical pain decreases, I recommend you cut down the use of pain pills. These medications have side-effects and are meant only for short-term use. Usually the pain decreases enough by fourth day after surgery so that no narcotic pain medication is necessary.

If you have any question or problem, please call my office: **708-799-2911 in Illinois or 219-836-4955 in Indiana and ask for Joann.**