

# About Your Surgery

A guide from Azalea Orthopedics



POSTERIOR CERVICAL FUSION

*AZALEA*  
ORTHOPEDICS

# Posterior Cervical Fusion

## Post-operative Instructions

Successful surgery depends not only on the success of the procedure, but also on your cooperation and compliance during the post-operative period. To assist you in this process, below are instructions and guidelines to follow during your recovery period.

### *Wound*

- There are typically dissolving sutures in the incision that do not need to be removed. Your incision will be assessed for these at your post-operative office visit.
- Dermabond, skin glue, will be placed on your incision. There is no need to try to pull it off, it will come off on its own within the first two weeks after surgery.
- You may shower the day after surgery. Do not swim or soak in water for 6 weeks.
- Do not put creams or ointments on the wound for at least 3 weeks.
- If you had bone harvested for a graft, there may be swelling and numbness at the site. These are normal. Use ice packs to help the swelling. The numbness will gradually fade over several months. There could be some minor residual numbness.

### *Collar/DME*

- You may be placed in a collar after surgery. Wear this as instructed by your surgeon
- If you are at high risk for poor bone healing, you may be placed in a bone growth stimulator. You need to wear this daily as directed for 6 months.

### *Pain Relief*

- Our office will provide you with prescription pain medication to help with your surgical pain. You should use these medications only as directed and only if needed.
- As your incision heals, we would expect you to begin weaning from prescription medications. This should begin about 3-4 weeks after surgery.
- If you are prescribed antibiotics after surgery, please finish them in their entirety.

- You will need to avoid anti-inflammatory medications for 1 week before and 3 months following surgery. Use of these medications could delay the healing of your fusion.
- You will need to avoid blood thinners (Aspirin, Coumadin, Lovenox, Plavix) for 1 week prior to surgery. In most cases, you may restart them (at the doctor's discretion) 4 days after surgery or 4 days after drains are removed.
- Remember, ABSOLUTELY NO MEDICATION REFILLS WILL BE PROCESSED ON THE WEEKEND. Please plan accordingly. Contact your pharmacy to process all refill requests.
- Your surgery required the use of spinal instrumentation. You should notify your dentist of this prior to having dental work/cleaning. It is advised that you be pre-medicated with antibiotics prior to these procedures for the first 2 years following your surgery. The antibiotics should be given to you by your dentist.

### *Exercise/Activity*

- The best exercise is walking. Small amounts done frequently are best. Try to set a goal of one mile per day total. It is best to stay mobile.
- Follow the instructions given to you by the physical therapist at the hospital prior to discharge.
- Repetitive activities using your arms may aggravate muscle spasms around your neck and upper back. Modify your activity with this in mind.
- Do not lift above your head for the first 8 weeks after surgery. It is okay to raise your arms to comb and wash your hair.
- Do not lift more than 5-10 lbs for the first 8 weeks after surgery.
- Avoid stairs if you are wearing your collar– they are a fall hazard.
- DO NOT SMOKE. This increases the chance that your bone will not heal properly. See your primary care physician if you need assistance to quit smoking.

### *Driving*

It is the policy of this office to advise you not to drive while under the influence of pain medications.

### *Return to Work*

- You can begin doing light desk/phone work as tolerated about 2-3 weeks after surgery.
- If your job requires heavy physical activity, you will be unable to perform this type of work for at least 12 weeks after surgery.

## *Follow-up*

Please call the office to schedule your first post-operative visit 6 weeks after your surgery.

## *What to Watch For*

- Please contact our office for any of the following: Oral temperature greater than 101° F, excessive redness, swelling, or drainage at the incision site, new or increasing pain/numbness/weakness in your arms/legs, clear liquid draining from the wound.
- For general medical problems such as sore throat, cough, nasal drainage, etc., please contact your primary care physician. You should also contact your primary care physician regarding in questions about your routine medications not prescribed by this office.
- For medical emergencies, please call 911 or report to the nearest emergency room.



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