

Spine & Brain

Christopher MacKay M.D.

Mackayspineandbraingroup.com

715-843-1000

Postop Instructions for Our Neck Surgery Patients

Thank you for letting us provide your surgical care. Taking care of yourself after surgery is a key part of your recovery. This information is for our patients who have undergone neck surgery. This information sheet is a general guideline to postoperative care, and we may provide you different or additional instructions as needed for you.

ACTIVITY

Walking is the best form of exercise after surgery. If your condition permits, we recommend walking several times a day. Start by walking in your home, and then progress to walking outside, or in a public place. If you would like to use a treadmill, place the incline setting to zero. Use your judgment as to how fast or far to walk and increase your pace and distance gradually.

Avoid lifting more than 10 pounds for the first six weeks after surgery. After the six weeks the restrictions will be modified by your surgeon. Ten pounds is approximately the weight of a gallon of milk.

We do not advise driving until all pain medication has been stopped and a vehicle can be safely controlled. You may be given a neck collar or back brace which can impair your ability to look around you. If you feel unsafe to drive have someone else drive for you, Use your best judgment in this regard.

WOUND CARE

If your incision is covered by a dressing, this should be changed daily for the first three days following surgery. Afterwards you may leave the wound uncovered. A few small spots of blood on the dressing are normal. Some swelling, redness, and pain is common. This will normally go away as the wound heals.

Your wound is closed by absorbable sutures. A layer of glue or steri strips may be placed over the incision for additional support. Let the glue or strips fall off on their own. The glue looks like blue plastic, and the steri strips look like small Band-aids. In the event we used non-absorbable sutures, we will usually remove those at the first postoperative visit.

When you shower have the wound uncovered and let the water bounce off your skin. Afterwards blot the wound dry with a towel. Do not scrub the wound with a washcloth or towel. Do not submerge the

wound under water (no hot tubs, no baths) until instructed by us. Do not apply ointments, creams, gels, or lotions to the incision since this can cause irritation or infection.

PAIN MANAGEMENT

Some pain can be expected after surgery, and you may be given pain medication for this at discharge. Take your pain medication as directed. Do not take pain medications with alcohol or with illicit drugs.

Pain medication can cause side effects such as nausea, vomiting, and especially constipation. To minimize the likelihood of constipation, take the pain medications only when you need them for pain relief, and try to stay adequately hydrated and include foods with fiber in your diet, or fiber supplements. If there is an over-the-counter medication you have taken in the past for constipation, please feel free to try this. If your symptoms do not improve, you can consider talking to your local pharmacist for advice for other over-the-counter treatments, or your primary care provider or contact us.

You may have been prescribed muscle relaxants as well. Please take as needed and as directed.

If you need a refill, please contact our office. Try to contact us 24-48 hours before you run out of your medication, to give us adequate time to provide you with a refill. Prescription requests cannot be filled on the weekend, if a request is made on a Friday, the refill may not be available until the following week.

NECK COLLARS

Depending upon your individual circumstances, you may be prescribed a neck collar.

We will sometimes provide you with a collar for you to wear only as needed for your comfort, and you can decide when to wear the collar or not to wear it, based on whether it helps you with your comfort. Sometimes putting the collar on if your neck is sore or the muscles feel tight will help.

We will sometimes provide you with a collar specifically to immobilize your neck and we will want you to wear this all or nearly all the time. Ask us which of the instructions below you should follow.

NO Neck Collar

Neck Collar

For comfort use only. Wear the collar only as needed for comfort. Wearing the collar may help your neck feel better. You do not need to wear the collar at night, or in the shower, unless it feels better to do so.

For neck immobilization. You should always wear the collar except to remove it as follows to clean your neck.

To clean your neck, remove the front half of the collar but leave the back half of the collar on. To clean the back of your neck, leave the front half of the collar on while you take the back half off. Wear your collar in the shower, then after the shower change out the wet inserts or pads and replace them with the dry inserts or pads. Allow the wet inserts or pads to dry before re-using. You should have been provided with two sets of the soft inserts for the collar so that you will always have one set in the collar while the other set of soft inserts can be cleaned.

FOLLOW-UP CARE

You will be seen in our clinic 10-14 days after surgery. Our office usually makes this appointment for you when we schedule your surgery, but if you leave the hospital without one, please contact our office to schedule this.

If your appointment is already scheduled, please call the office to verify the time, date, and location since we have two office locations.

Contact us if you have other questions, or concerns. We would rather know how you are doing, and try to answer your questions or concerns, than have you be uncertain or worried about how you are doing.

If you experience emergent or urgent conditions call 911. Otherwise, please contact us at 715-843-1000 or through the patient portal at spineandbraingroup.com. Our office hours are Monday-Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. If you were to call after hours, you will automatically be connected to our paging service

We hope this information is helpful and thank you once again for allowing us to provide your surgical care.