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DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS FOLLOWING A POSTERIOR CERVICAL FUSION

You had a surgical procedure called a cervical spinal fusion. During this procedure Dr. Wilkerson made an incision on the back of your neck so that the spinal muscles, bones and nerves could be exposed. Bone was removed and then hardware (rods, screws, spacers) and bone products were used to obtain proper spinal alignment and stabilize your neck. These instructions provide additional information regarding your care at home.

Incision Care:

- Starting 3 days after surgery, you may shower with mild soap or shampoo daily, gently washing your incision and pat dry. This is the only time you may touch your incision.
- Your incision was closed with absorbable sutures. Staples were placed over the skin. They should remain in place for 1-2 weeks.
- Do not apply ointments, lotions or creams to your incision.
- Apply an ice pack or a clean bag of frozen peas to your incision every 30 minutes to help reduce the swelling and discomfort, as needed.
- Do not use a hot tub, go swimming or take a bath until your incisions are completely healed (about 4 weeks for most people).
- Stop smoking as this delays healing and may cause a wound infection.

Activity:

- Start with light activity around the house for the first 3 days you are home.
- Gradually increase your activity starting with a short walk 1-2 times a day.
- Allow your body time to heal by resting for short periods during the day.
- Avoid contact sports, skating, bike riding or other activities for 6 weeks.
- You may **not** drive when taking pain medications and until cleared by Dr. Wilkerson.
- Avoid lifting, pushing or pulling heavy objects (more than 10 lbs) for 4 weeks.
- Avoid bending over or twisting to pick up things.
- Avoid sitting in soft chairs or slumping while you are sitting.
- Be sure to get up and move around/ stretch every 30 minutes while sitting.

Nutrition:

- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables to prevent constipation.

Medications:

- **Do not take any NSAIDS such as ibuprofen, (Advil), Naprosyn, (naproxen, Aleve) etc. for 3 months as this will inhibit your bones from fusing.**
- Take your pain medications as prescribed and gradually decrease these as your pain improves.

- You may need to take a stool softener (Colace) or a laxative (Dulcolax) that you can buy at a pharmacy until your bowels return to normal.
- You may need to use a suppository (Dulcolax or glycerin) or an enema if you have not had a bowel movement in 3 days.

Follow Up:

- Call Dr. Wilkerson's office when you get home to schedule your follow-up appointment.
- Follow up with your Primary Care Physician for all medical issues.

Call your doctor or return to the emergency room if you experience any of the following:

- Difficulty breathing or swallowing.
- Constipation- no bowel movement for more than 3 days.
- Difficulty moving or weakness of your arms or legs.
- Your pain is not well controlled on your pain medications.
- **A fever above 100 F.**
- Redness, swelling, odor or drainage at your incision site.
- Loss of bowel or bladder control.
- Headaches in an upright position which resolve with lying down.
- Difficulty feeling your legs or arms
- Difficulty walking.