

NEUROSURGICAL ASSOCIATES, L.L.C  
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**DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS FOLLOWING A POSTERIOR SPINAL FUSION**

You had a surgical procedure called a spinal fusion. During the procedure Dr. Wilkerson made an incision on your back so that the spinal muscles, bones and nerves could be exposed. Discs may have been removed and then hardware (rods, screws, spacers) and bone products were used to obtain proper spinal alignment and stabilize your spine. 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.
- 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 patients).
- Stop smoking as this delays healing and may cause a wound infection.
- Your incision was closed with absorbable sutures. Either Steri-strips or staples were placed over the skin. If you have staples, they should be removed in approximately 2 weeks. If you have Steri-strips, these should remain in place for 1-2 weeks. The Steri-strips should be removed after 1-2 weeks if they are still in place.

**Activities:**

- 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.
- Wear a back brace or corset when out of bed, as directed by your neurosurgeon.

**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 medications as prescribed and gradually decrease pain medications as your pain improves.

- You may need to take a stool softener (Colace) or a laxative 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.
- **Notes about pain medications and opioids (Norco, hydrocodone, oxycodone, Percocet, Dilaudid):** These medications can be habit forming and addicting, and can lead to overdose and possibly death. Do not combine these medications with alcohol, and if you take other sedating medications (muscle relaxers, antianxiety meds, for example) or have sleep apnea, take extra care while using these medicines. We will start decreasing your dose after a week or so, and will only be able to prescribe pain medications for a maximum of three months after surgery. After that time, you will need to contact your prior provider for assistance.

### **Follow Up:**

- Call Dr. Wilkerson's office when you get home to schedule your follow-up appointment, unless one has already been scheduled.
- Follow up with your Primary Care Physician for all medical issues.

### **Call your doctor if you experience any of the following:**

- Constipation- no bowel movement for more than 3 days.
- Difficulty moving or weakness of your legs.
- Back pain that is not well controlled on your pain medications.
- A **fever above 100F**.
- 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.
- Difficulty walking.

**If you are unable to reach the doctor and you have an emergency, go to the emergency room.**