

Surgery or Procedure Information

Cervical Surgery

MaineHealth Neurosurgery Discharge Instructions

Please call your surgeon's office if you feel any of the following:

- Pain that is worse than before the surgery.
- New numbness or weakness that doesn't go away.
- Unable to control your bowels or bladder. This might be more urination, burning pain, or being unable to urinate.
- Trouble swallowing or breathing.
- Redness, swelling, worse pain, hot to touch, or draining fluid from your wound.
- Fever above 101°F (38.3°C) and/or shaking chills.
- Continued nausea or vomiting.

If you can't reach your doctor, go directly to the nearest Emergency Room or call 911.

Medicines and pain control

We need to know 2 business days before you need any refills.

- Always take your pain medicine with food.
- Do not drink any alcohol while taking pain medicine.
- Do not drive or operate any machinery while taking your prescription pain medicine.
- Put ice packs over your wound dressing for 10 to 15 minutes every 2 hours for the first 24 hours after surgery. This can help lower incision pain and swelling.
- If you feel you need to take more than your recommended dose of medicine, please call our office at 207-885-0011. Do not increase on your own.

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Daily activities

- Do not lift or carry more than 5 to 8 lbs (the same as a gallon of milk). Use 2 hands to lift whenever possible.
- Keep your arms close to your body when you reach, lift or carry any item. Do not reach far and do not reach often, especially overhead.
- Do not push or pull often, especially any aggressive motion. This may be sweeping, vacuuming, or walking a dog using your affected arm. Only use short, small strokes that are close to your body when you begin to sweep, vacuum, or walk a dog again in the future.
- If you drove a car often before surgery, you can drive again after surgery once:
 - » It has been at least 1 week since your surgery.
 - » You are not taking any narcotics or medicines that cloud your thinking.
 - » You feel like you can safely control your foot and leg.
- If you are prescribed a cervical collar following your surgery, do not drive until your surgeon has told you to stop using your collar.

Body posture

- Keep your head, shoulders and hips in a straight line.
- Do not lean your head or bend your neck for long periods of time.
- This may mean you cannot use a computer, or read from and use a cellphone.
- Be careful of your head and neck position when standing at a counter or sink.
- Don't wait until it hurts to move.
- Change positions often.
- Don't sit for long periods of time, such as on long car rides or using a laptop or computer.
- If you find sleeping uncomfortable, try using a contoured pillow or rolled up bath towel (secured with rubber bands at each end) under your neck. This will support your spine when you are lying down. Otherwise use only 1 pillow.

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Exercise

- Light exercise, such as walking short distances, helps healing. Stop if you experience unusual pain or discomfort. Do not use arm weights or exercise bands. If pain, numbness or weakness returns, you may be doing too much. Rest and the pain should go away.
- If you have more questions or concerns about exercise or activity, a physical therapy referral may be beneficial. Call the nursing line at 207-885-0011 to discuss.

Cleaning and covering your wound

- Do **NOT** take a bath, swim or submerge your surgical area in water until your incision has fully healed. You may shower on the day after surgery unless your wound is draining.
- Keep the dressing clean and dry for 24 hours. If the dressing gets wet, you should change it to a new, dry dressing. You can remove the dressing from your incision after 24 hours.
- You do not need to cover the incision unless there is drainage. Your incision is kept closed with glue. If there is drainage, keep wound dry for 5 days with daily dressing change. If drainage stops and wound is dry after that, you may shower with the wound uncovered.
- Only cover your wound with dry gauze if it gets irritated by your clothing.
- Do **NOT** apply ointments or creams to your wound until it has healed and there is no scab or opening along the edges.
- Do **NOT** touch the wound directly until it has healed.
- Make sure you or someone else checks your incision daily for redness or swelling. If there is redness or swelling, call our office at 207-885-0011.

Diet

- Eat small, frequent meals at first and then eat more as you can.
- Eat extra fiber or take over-the-counter medicines to avoid constipation, especially while taking your pain medicine.

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Returning to work

You and your surgeon will talk at your follow-up appointment to plan your date for returning to work. If possible start work again slowly. You can do this by working fewer hours at a time or for fewer days. Take short stretch breaks at work and change positions as often as you can. Try placing ice packs on your back during your scheduled breaks or 2 to 3 times per day as needed.

In general, you may return to work when you reach these goals:

- You don't need or use medicines that cloud your thinking.
- You are taking care of your needs, such as:
 - » Bathing
 - » Dressing
 - » Driving
 - » Making meals
 - » Light household tasks
- You can move freely through the motions needed for your job. For example; sit, stand, walk, or carry.

How long can I expect to be out of work?

For most people, the timeline of returning to work depends on how physically demanding your job is:

- If you normally don't lift more than 10 pounds and sit for most of your job, your job or activity level is sedentary.
 - » Your expected return to work will be anywhere from 1 to 8 weeks after your surgery.
- If you normally lift up to 20 pounds and do more regular walking and standing during your day or you use leg controls, such as in bull dozer, your job or activity level is light.
 - » Your expected return to work will be anywhere from 2 to 8 weeks after surgery.
- If you normally lift up to 50 pounds, lift objects throughout the day and have to carry up to 20 pounds, your job or activity level is medium.
 - » Your expected return to work will be anywhere from 6 to 12 weeks after surgery.

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- If you normally lift up to 100 pounds, lift objects often during the day and have to carry up to 50 pounds, your job or activity level is heavy.
 - » You may return to work and normal activity only after talking with your surgeon at your follow-up appointment.

You may have more restrictions. If you do, your surgeon will talk with you about this at your follow-up appointment. If you have questions or concerns about exercise or activity, we can write you a physical therapy referral. Call our office at 207-885-0011 to ask.

Follow-up:

1. Call our office at 207-885-0011 within 3 business days after your surgery. We need to schedule or confirm your follow-up appointment.
2. **For all emergencies call 911.**
3. If you have any questions or paperwork (such as disability forms), please bring them to your next appointment.
4. Contact your Primary Care Physician for other healthcare maintenance.

For More Information

MaineHealth Neurosurgery and Spine

207-885-0011

MaineHealth.org/NeuroEdu

