

POSTOP INSTRUCTIONS FOR LOW BACK SURGERY

ACTIVITY

- You must attempt to walk daily. It is best to walk 5-6 times per day short distances rather than one long walk. Increase your walking every other day by 5-10 minutes. Walk to your tolerance without overdoing it. Inactivity will only serve to slow your recovery.
- You can shower when told it is acceptable by your physician. Do not lie in a bathtub or enter a hot tub or swimming pool. You may be asked to cover your wound for a period of time when you shower. Saran wrap works well to cover the wound. While showering, avoid direct shower spray on your wound. Face the shower. You can wash your hair unless instructed not to. After showering, blot the wound dry, do not rub it. Leave the Steri-Strips, if they are present, in place.
- Follow the proper body mechanics as you were instructed in the hospital. Avoid twisting and bending. If you need to reach to the floor, it is better to squat. Do not lift or carry anything over 5-10 pounds. Your physician will instruct you when you can increase this weight limitation. Try to limit stair climbing as much as possible.
- If you must ride in a car, keep it to short distances. It sometimes helps to recline the seat and to use pillows to support your body. Ask your doctor when you can ride or drive. Under no circumstances should you drive while taking pain medication.

DIET

- Eat a balanced diet that is high in fiber. Pain medications tend to cause constipation. If you do become constipated, a stool softener such as Colace or a mild laxative such as milk of magnesia may be helpful. Both of these medications are over-the-counter drugs.

MEDICATION

- Take the medication as prescribed. Do not try to ease every bit of pain with the medication. As time goes on your body will develop a tolerance for the pain medication reducing its effectiveness. In this situation you tend to want to take more of it.
- Keep an optimistic outlook on life and look at the positive aspects of your life. Try to do something fun each day even though it may be small. Do not let your physical limitations overwhelm you. Try not to think of all the pain you have gone through. You will have peaks and valleys in your recovery and some days will be better than others. That is to be expected. Recuperation from this surgery does take time.

SEXUAL ACTIVITY

- Sexual activity can be done with great care. We have a booklet for you if you so desire. You can also discuss this with your physician.

Finally, although these instructions are simple, they are very important for your recovery. Remember your operation is only part of the solution to your back problem. The rest is up to you and the amount of effort you put into your recovery. Do not hesitate to call the office during business hours if you have any concerns or questions. Your questions are important, and the office staff and your physician are ready to assist you. For emergency situations on the weekends or evenings, the exchange will contact your physician to assist you, or in their absence, the doctor on call will assist you.

GAS/ya