

POSTOP INSTRUCTIONS FOR NECK 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 by 5-10 minutes every other day. If there is an *increase* in your pain, back off on the time but continue with the multiple walks.
- You should shower instead of taking a bath. Avoid hot tubs or pools until instructed by your physician. Ask your physician when you can shower. When you shower, try to keep your head in a neutral position. Avoid tilting your head backward excessively or forward.
- Do not drive a car until you are instructed that it is safe by your physician. If you ride in a car, it helps to support your head with a small pillow. In no circumstances should you drive while taking pain medication.
- If you are given a brace, the brace is to be worn when you are up out of bed. In most circumstances it can be removed for showering, hygiene, or for meals. In some cases, the neck brace needs to be worn at all times. If this is the case, you will be instructed as such by your physician.
- Eat a balanced diet that is high in fiber. Pain medications tend to cause some constipation. If you become constipated, a stool softener such as Colace or a mild laxative such as milk of magnesia may be helpful. Both are available over the counter.
- Take medications as prescribed. Do not try to ease every bit of pain with medication. As time goes on your body will develop a tolerance for the pain medication reducing its effectiveness and you will tend to want to take more of it. This can get you into a vicious cycle of requiring more medication over time. Try to gradually reduce the amount of medication you take for pain.
- Keep an optimistic outlook on life. Look at the positive aspects of your life and try to do something fun each day. Do not let your physical limitations overwhelm you. Do not think about all the pain you have gone through. Just take life one day at a time and look at the positive things each day. You will have peaks and valleys in your recovery period, some days will be better than others. That is expected, recuperation does take time.
- Sexual activity can be done with care. We have a booklet available if you desire. Any questions regarding sexual activity and its relationship to your surgery should be discussed with your physician.
- Please call the office if you should develop a temperature or drainage from your wound. Also call if there is any change in your neurological condition, or if you have any problems with swallowing or breathing.

Although these instructions are simple, they are extremely important. 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 worries, questions or problems. Your questions and concerns are important and the office staff and your physician are there to assist you. For emergency situations on weekends or evenings, the exchange will contact your physician, or in their absence, the doctor on call will assist you.

GAS/ya