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Discharge Instructions Anterior Cervical Fusion

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Name: _____

Medications:

- Taking acetaminophen (Tylenol) is acceptable, but avoid ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil), Naproxen (Naprosyn), Indomethacin (Indocin), and Aleve for three months.
- If you experience constipation while taking a narcotic pain reliever, begin using an over-the-counter laxative right away.
- Use a muscle relaxant to prevent muscle spasms or severe muscle tightness.
- If you were taking Aspirin or Plavix prior to surgery, you may resume these medications on the third day after the procedure, unless directed otherwise by your physician.

Diet:

- Resume whatever diet you were on before surgery (e.g., unrestricted, diabetic, low sodium, etc.)
- You may find that softer foods or thick liquids are easier to swallow initially after surgery, but swallowing should become progressively easier.
- For optimal bone healing after a spinal fusion procedure, both Calcium and Vitamin D are necessary. Most people require in a day 1,200 mg of Calcium and 800 International Units (IU) of Vitamin D. While getting enough of both is important, taking too much can be harmful and contribute to other medical problems such as kidney stones or hardening of the arteries, which can lead to heart attack or stroke. In general, four daily servings of dairy products (milk, yogurt, cheese, etc.) should be adequate for you to meet this requirement **without** the need for dietary supplements.

Activity:

- If a collar has been ordered for you, wear it at all times except for when shaving or bathing. When the collar is off, keep your head in the same position as if the collar were still applied.
- Avoid lifting overhead.
- Avoid pushing/pulling and lifting over 15 lbs.
- Walking is a good exercise. Go for at least four short walks a day, even if inside your home.
- You may remove your Ted Hose stockings once you are consistently walking four times a day.
- Do not drive while still required to wear the collar or if you have had any pain medication within four hours. If you are not required to wear a collar, you may drive after 3 days depending on your pain medication use. You may ride in a car as a passenger as much as tolerated.
- Provided that the above restrictions are observed, you may engage in other activities, including sexual intercourse, that do not result in worsened pain either at the time of the activity or the following morning.

Wound Care:

- Call the office if you have drainage from your wound, separation of wound edges, or increased pain, redness or swelling.
- Call the office if you have an elevated temperature (101 F or greater).
- You may shower at any time, but do not soak the incision in a tub or pool for 10 days after surgery. Dry the incision by blotting, not rubbing.
- You do not need to keep a dressing on the wound.
- Leave the steri-strips on for 10 days after surgery. If their edges curl up, you may trim carefully with scissors. If they fall off early, don't worry. Re-absorbable sutures are beneath the skin edges and will continue to support the incision while it heals.

X-rays:

- You will need to have X-rays done before your four-week follow-up appointment.
- These can be done at the hospital or the imaging center in our building. If you choose to have them done at the Holland Hospital Imaging Center on the day of your appointment, please plan to arrive 45 minutes prior to your appointment.
- Please bring the X-rays with you to your follow-up appointment UNLESS they were done at Holland Hospital. (We can access their x-rays via a secure Internet link.)

Follow-Up: Date: _____ Time: _____

With: David W. Lowry, MD
Scott M. Tuinstra PA-C