

## **Surgical Incision**

It is important to care for your surgical wound daily. The dressing which is applied in the operating room should be kept in place for 48 hours. If it was not removed in the hospital, you may take the dressing off at home. Please keep your incision clean and dry. You may shower three days after surgery, lightly washing your incision with an antibacterial soap and water. You will find that the incision is covered with special strips of tape that will eventually fall off after a couple of weeks. The wound does not need to be covered, although some patients may choose to cover the incision with a light dressing to prevent rubbing from your clothes. Avoid hot tubs, pools, lakes and bathtubs (or any type of "sitting" water) for three weeks. You do not need to apply any special creams or ointments to your incision unless specifically prescribed by your surgeon.

Your incision should be inspected daily for signs and symptoms of infection which may include:

- Redness and swelling
- Warmth to the touch
- Drainage from wound
- Increase in pain
- Fever greater than 101 degrees

Should any of these arise, please notify your surgeon immediately

Following cervical surgery, you may find an area above each ear slightly tender to touch. A halo may have been used to stabilize the neck during surgery. A solution of half hydrogen peroxide and half sterile saline may be applied over these areas with a cotton ball until completely healed.

A two week follow-up appointment for a wound check will be made for you before surgery. At that time, any sutures in the skin will be removed. If you did not receive a follow-up date or are unsure of your appointment, please contact the office at: 1.866.974.CORE (2673).

## **Antibiotics**

If your surgery required placement of metal instrumentation, you will require use of antibiotics prior to certain procedures. Antibiotics should be taken before any dental procedure (except routine cleaning), oral surgery, bladder procedures, colon/sigmoidoscopy.

The CORE Institute recommended antibiotic regimen is two grams of oral Amoxicillin one hour prior to procedure. This can be prescribed by your dentist, primary care physician, or The CORE Institute physician.

There are alternative medications available to those with allergies to Penicillin.

## **Driving**

You may resume driving after you discontinue use of prescription narcotic pain medication.

## **Braces**

Following cervical surgery, you probably will be given a soft collar to wear. This is for extra support and use may be discontinued when you feel comfortable.

## **Activity**

Your surgeon wants you to be active after surgery. This improves your overall health and prevents postoperative complications such as pneumonia and blood clots.

Following surgery, the following restrictions apply:

- Do not lift over 10 pounds
- Do not reach over your head (such as putting away dishes)
- Avoid abrupt movements of turning head or looking up

To avoid complications from blood clots, you should wear the compression stockings as prescribed by your physician.

You will receive therapy instructions from the therapy department before discharge. Please work on your therapy at home. Some patients may need further therapy at an outpatient therapy facility, such as The CORE Institute, or home physical therapy. The case manager at the hospital will help you with your therapy arrangements.

You may begin driving once you are off narcotic pain medications and are ambulating without difficulty.

## **Avoid All Blood Thinners**

It is imperative after spine surgery that patients avoid all anticoagulants or blood thinners. This includes:

- Aspirin
- Coumadin/Warfarin
- Plavix
- Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Medications such as:
  - Ibuprofen/Motrin/Advil
  - Aleve/Naprosyn
  - Relafen/Voltaren/Indocin/Mobic/Lodine/Feldene/Clinoril/Ketoprofen
- Celebrex
- All herbal supplements and vitamins.
  - Many of these supplements contain blood thinners. It is best to avoid them after surgery unless specifically approved by your surgeon.

These medications can be resumed three months following surgery

Prescription medications may be resumed two weeks following surgery or after your follow-up visit with your surgeon.

## **Pain Management**

After a major orthopedic procedure, most patients will require prescription pain medications, including narcotics, to treat their postoperative pain. Medications such as Percocet (Oxycodone), Vicodin (Hydrocodone), Darvocet (Propoxyphene), and Codeine are all controlled narcotic pain medications that need to be monitored closely. With chronic use, they pose a risk for addiction. Patients should treat their pain only as needed with these medications and wean off of the narcotics in the first few weeks following surgery. These medications can cause many side effects, which may include nausea, lightheadedness, confusion, sedation, urinary retention, and constipation. To avoid constipation, please take an over-the-counter stool softener such as Docusate or Senna.

If you require a refill on your narcotic pain medication, please notify your surgeon early. Federal law prohibits the renewal or refill of some narcotic pain medications by phone, therefore requiring a written prescription. Please allow two days for your pain medications to be refilled through your pharmacy or a new prescription made available for you at the office. Narcotic pain medications can not be renewed after hours or on the weekends. If you have questions regarding your prescriptions, pain, or find that your pain is not relieved by your prescription medication, please notify your surgeon.

## **Smoking**

Studies have shown that smoking after surgery may interfere with bone graft fusion and may prevent optimal results of your surgery. It is encouraged to refrain from smoking if possible.

## **Questions**

If any questions or concerns arise after your hospital discharge, please call The CORE Institute at: 1.866.974.CORE (2673).