

The Procedure

Your surgical procedure is an Anterior Cervical Discectomy and Fusion (ACDF). Please keep this information for reference when calling our office. On-call physicians will need to know exactly the type of surgery you have had, and the date. Your follow-up appointment is scheduled for 6 weeks after your surgery.

After Your Surgery: As you recover from your surgery, you should experience progressive improvement in your preoperative pain. It is not unusual to feel some pain, numbness, tightness, burning or other "funny" feelings for a while following your operation. Usually these sensations will lessen and mostly go away with time. Numbness can last for weeks to months. Swallowing difficulty is common and may last several weeks. You may find it necessary to consume liquids only during this time, gradually taking solids as you tolerate it. It is not uncommon to experience pain in the back of your neck and/or between your shoulder blades. This comes from opening up the collapsed disk spaces and should improve over 4-6 weeks.

At the time of discharge, the hospital nurse should give you prescriptions and a follow-up appointment. You should be given an order for X-rays of your cervical spine. These will need to be performed the week of your follow-up visit. Be certain that you have the actual x-rays when you return to my office. If you were not given a return appointment, please call our office upon arriving home to schedule this visit. Please call between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Wound Care: If your wound has been closed with Dermabond, please follow the care instructions from the Dermabond handout. Do not scratch the Dermabond. It will begin to slough off 7-10 days after your surgery. At this time you may use a warm wet

washcloth to rub the rest of it off. If your wound has been closed with steri-strips (butterfly-like skin closures over your incision), you should remove them 7-10 days after your operation, if they have not fallen off on their own. If your wound has been closed with Dermabond, you may get your incision wet in the shower, as soon as you wish, since this closure is waterproof. If your wound has been closed with staples, sutures or steri-strips, you may remove your dressing two days after the surgery and, at that time, you may get your incision wet in the shower. New bandages or dressings are not necessary. Use only soap and water to gently clean the area around your wound. Do not soak your incision for four weeks following the operation. During this time, bathtubs, hot tubs, swimming pools, whirlpools, and the like, are not allowed. Do not let the shower water "beat" on your incision.

You should not put any salve, lotion, ointment or Vitamin E on your incision during the first month after surgery. If you notice any problems with your incision, such as severe redness, drainage, swelling, etc., please call the office as soon as possible for instructions. It is not uncommon to have mild redness with staples.

Activities & Driving: You are not permitted to drive a motor vehicle for several weeks following the surgery. You may not drive while taking pain medication. It is unlikely that you will feel comfortable enough in the first 30 days to drive. Most people will not require a collar after surgery. However, if you are one of those people who I tell will require a collar, please bring your collar with you for your surgery. If you have been given a cervical collar you should wear it at all times until I take it off. This will usually be done when you return to the office 4 weeks after surgery. If you have been given 2 collars, you may shower with one and change collars after showering. This allows you to have a clean collar on at all times. You should not do any lifting, bending, straining, stooping, or twisting. You should not lift anything heavier than ten pounds.



POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

Anterior Cervical Discectomy and Fusion

The only exercise permitted, and in fact encouraged, is walking. After you have been up and around for several days, begin a walking program, gradually progressing to one mile, two to three times a day. When you return for your first postoperative visit (1 month), I will give you more exercises to do.

Prescription Refills: You have been given several medications. One is a pain medication and the other is a muscle relaxant. Take them both regularly for the first 3 days, then reduce dosages to an **As Needed** basis. You have been given a 30-day supply of these medications from the time of surgery and you should not require any more. If you require medication refills, Please call the office between 9:00 and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. We will try to expedite your request but please allow 24 hours after your call for us to process your refill request. Please call your pharmacy after 24 hours first, before calling our office again about the prescription. ***The on-call physician will not refill any prescriptions at night or on weekends.***

You may NOT take **anti-inflammatory** medications such as Ibuprofen, Advil, Motrin, Aleve, Celebrex, Nuprin or Vioxx in the first 3 months following surgery. These medications will interfere with the fusion process and can limit your progress. Tylenol or Acetaminophen is okay to take and will not affect your fusion process. You should NOT smoke or use any **tobacco** during the first 6 months following your surgery. The nicotine in tobacco severely blocks the fusion process. Your fusion takes approximately 6-12 months to take place. If your fusion does not heal, you could require more surgery.

Sexual Activities: You may resume sexual activities once your post-operative pain subsides. For females, take necessary precautions to avoid pregnancy until your fusion is solid and you have discussed pregnancy with me.

Out of Work: You can expect to be out of work for a minimum of one to six weeks following your operation,

depending on your healing progress and type of work you do.

We want your surgical experience to go smoothly. If you have any questions or problems, please do not hesitate to call the office at 508.771.0006.

You may find the following websites to be helpful regarding your surgery: www.allaboutneckpain.com, www.spineuniverse.com, www.neurosurgery.org, www.spinehealth.com, www.allaboutbackpain.com.

Thank you for letting me to participate in your care,

Paul J Houle, MD
Achilles Papavasiliou MD
Patrick Murray, MD
G. Kenji Nakata, MD