

POST-OP CARE INSTRUCTIONS

During your recovery from brain or spinal surgery, it is common to have effects from anesthesia, immobility, or from your pain medications. Listed below are some of the more common postoperative occurrences. Should you not be satisfied with your recovery, or if you have any questions at any time, please contact the office to speak with a **nurse**.

FATIGUE:

This is very common after a brain or spinal surgery. Needing a nap during the day for the first several days after your operation is not unusual. Walking short distances, often during the day, will help you regain your stamina. Maintaining good nutrition will also help your recovery. Nutritional supplements, (i.e. Ensure/Enlive/Boost) are available over the counter.

PAIN MANAGEMENT:

Your doctor will have prescribed a pain pill for you. It is very important that this medication be taken according to the directions on the bottle. We **request** 72 hours notice (excluding weekends) for medication refills. You will need to provide us with your pharmacy information. For less severe pain, it is usually acceptable to use an over the counter product (i.e. Aleve, Ibuprofen, or Tylenol). Taking a short walk can often loosen up muscles and help the pain. It is acceptable to use a heating pad or ice pack to help control the pain. As healing time occurs, you will be encouraged to make every effort to wean from the prescription pain medications, as you are able.

(NOTE: For those patients who have had neck or low back spinal fusion surgery, it is recommended they use only a Tylenol preparation when switching to over the counter pain pills. Use of anti-inflammatory medications such as Aleve or Ibuprofen may slow the healing of a fusion. These are generally held for 3 months following a fusion surgery. Your doctor will advise when you may resume use of an anti-inflammatory.)

CONSTIPATION:

It is not unusual to be troubled with constipation in the first week or two following a surgery. Being inactive and use of narcotic pain pills contribute to this problem. Drink plenty of water daily. A diet rich in fresh fruits and vegetables can also help. Over the counter stool softeners or laxatives may be used.

PNEUMONIA:

If you have had a general anesthesia, it is important to “exercise” your lungs. It is recommended that you take deep breaths frequently. If you were given an Incentive Spirometer, use it multiple times daily for the first several days following surgery. It will help to inflate your lungs fully, and prevent the development of pneumonia. If you experience fever greater than 101 degrees, cough, chills, or chest tightness, notify the office immediately.

URINARY SYMPTOMS:

Sometimes it is difficult to empty the bladder after a surgery. Notify your doctor promptly if you feel you are not completely emptying your bladder. Also call for any urinary discomforts (i.e. burning or urination). These problems can occur from having had a catheter in the bladder, and sometimes from medications.

DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS:

General anesthesia and inactivity increase the risk of developing a deep vein thrombosis usually in the lower extremities. Blood pools in a calf vein until a clot forms, which compromises blood flow and can cause calf tenderness and swelling. Walking after surgery is the most effective way to prevent formation of deep vein thrombosis. You should walk as much as you feel comfortable. It is also helpful to exercise your legs when you are seated, or when in bed. A quick and easy exercise is to “paddle your feet”. The nursing staff will give you frequent reminders to walk and exercise your legs. Deep vein thrombosis can travel to the lungs, causing a pulmonary embolism. If you notice the sudden onset of chest discomfort, or shortness of breath, go to the hospital emergency room.

INCISION CARE:

Your incision should stay dry for 3 days. Showers are acceptable after that time. If you have been told you have a waterproof dressing, you may shower immediately. Avoid any tub, pool, or hot tub for 2 weeks. Allow steri striptapes to fall off on their own. Follow your doctor’s instructions for removal of any stitches. Please notify the office if you have redness, swelling, or drainage from your incision.

SLEEP DISTURBANCE:

Having had a general anesthetic can affect a sleep cycle. This is frustrating, but generally, a short-term problem. Being active during the day will help. Over the counter sleep aides may also be used.

POSTOPERATIVE APPOINTMENTS:

Please call the office as soon as you get home from the hospital to schedule the first postoperative appointment with your doctor.