**Posterior Cervical Laminectomy/Foraminotomy – Post-Operative Instructions**

Successful surgery depends not only on the success of the procedure, but also on your cooperation and compliance during the post-operative period. To assist you in this process, below are instructions and guidelines to follow during your recovery period.

**Follow-up**

* You will have two (2) follow-up visits - please call to schedule (**301.718.9611**)
	1. 2 weeks after surgery
	2. 3 months after surgery

**Wound**

* You may remove your dressing 48 hours after surgery. Keep steri-strips in place if used
	+ There are no stitches that need to be removed.
	+ Steri-strips will fall off in 7-14 days. If present after 2 weeks, you may peel them off.
* For larger surgeries, you may have staples closing the skin – these will need to be removed 10-14 days following surgery.
* You may shower once the dressing is removed (48 hours after surgery) – gently wash the over the wound and pat dry after showering.
* Do not swim or soak (baths, hot tubs, etc.) in water for 6 weeks. Do not put creams or ointments on the wound for at least 3 weeks.

**Brace**

* You may be given a collar to wear.
* The collar is to worn while you are up and about.
* You do not need to sleep in the collar unless you are told to do so.
* Further instructions will be given at your first postoperative visit.

**Symptoms to Expect**

* As you recover, it is not unusual to feel some pain, numbness, tightness, burning, or other funny feelings for a while after your operation
* Neck pain/soreness around the incision is the most common complaint following surgery. This will gradually improve, but it can take up to 8 weeks to resolve.
* You may also have some persistent arm pain, it should progressively improve and at no point should it be worse than before surgery.
* Some patients notice numbness or tingling after surgery – if you experience this, it should subside over time (often this takes a few months).
* Any weakness present before surgery can take 12-18 months to improve.
* Some people experience shoulder weakness after surgery. This often completely resolves on its own.

**Exercise/Activity – General Rule: IF IT HURTS, DON’T DO IT!**

* The best exercise is **walking**. It is best to stay mobile and it will help you recover faster.
	+ Please wait until your second follow-up to be cleared for more vigorous exercise routines/programs.
* Plan rest periods for each day.
* Minimize any bending, lifting (more than 15 lbs), or twisting (the “BLTs”) for the first 6 weeks after surgery
* It is ok to sit and sleep in any comfortable position

**Pain Relief**

* We will provide you with prescription **pain medication** to help with your surgical pain. You should use these medications only as directed and only if needed.
	+ As your incision heals, we would expect you to begin weaning from prescription medications. This should begin within 1-2 weeks of surgery and the goal is to be off pain medications by 3-4 weeks post-op.
	+ Constipation is a common side effect of pain medications. If you need to, you can take over the counter laxatives (Senokot, Milk of Magnesia, Dulcolax) as directed
* You will be prescribed a **muscle relaxant** to use as needed.
* You will need to **avoid**:
	+ Anti-inflammatory medications (ie Naproxen, Celebrex, Mobic, Ibuprofen, Aleve, Advil) for 1 week before and 1 week following surgery.
	+ Blood thinners (Aspirin, Coumadin, Lovenox, Plavix) for 1 week prior to surgery. In most cases, you may restart them (at the doctor’s discretion) 4 days after surgery or 4 days after drains are removed.

**Driving**

* It is the policy of this office to advise you not to drive while under the influence of pain medications.
* Driving while in a cervical collar is allowed in most states as long as you have three mirrors.
* Do not drive until you are cleared by your surgeon

**Return to Work**

* You can return to work as tolerated within 1-2 weeks of surgery for light desk/phone work
* If your job requires heavy physical activity, you will be unable to perform this type of work for at least 12 weeks after surgery (you will be cleared after your 2nd post-operative visit)

**What to Watch For**

* Please **call 911 immediately or go to the ER** if you developing any of the following:
	+ Difficulty breathing, shortness of breath, or pain when breathing
	+ Chest Pain
	+ Acute arm weakness/numbness/tingling
* Please contact our office (301.718.9611) for any of the following:
	+ Oral temperature greater than 101.5 ° F
	+ Excessive redness, swelling, or drainage at the incision site
	+ New or increasing pain/numbness/weakness in your legs
* For general medical problems such as sore throat, cough, nasal drainage, etc., please contact your primary care physician. You should also contact your primary care physician regarding in questions about your routine medications not prescribed by this office.
* For medical emergencies, please call 911 or report to the nearest emergency room