Returning Home After Your

Cervical Spinal Fusion

Patient Guide

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**Cervical Spinal Precautions: Must be strictly followed for 12 weeks**

* This helps the neck and spine maintain proper alignment, which assists with healing.
* A cervical collar must be worn at **all** times for **6 weeks** (even while sleeping and showering).
* No bending neck forwards, backwards, turning side to side or tipping head to the side.
* No lifting more than 5 pounds, or lifting your arms above shoulder height.

*An OrthoTech will fit you with your collar in the Outpatient Department*



**Before Surgery**

* Add railings to stairs.
* Ensure bottom of tub or shower has non-slip surface.
* Purchase drinking straws to prevent tipping your head back while drinking.
* If you are on your own, cook and freeze meals prior to surgery.
* Place items of everyday use within the height of your shoulder and hip.

**After Surgery**

**Getting in and Out of Bed**

* Log roll in and out of bed via side lying.
* Bed may be inclined as per post-op orders made by your surgeon.
* Do ankle pumps and deep breathing

**Lying in Bed**

* You must lie flat in bed and only use one small pillow.
* You need to maintain proper alignment of your neck, and may only elevate the head of the bed if allowed by your surgeon.

**During Everyday Activities**

* Take breaks lying down during the day, as this will rest your neck and help with your neck pain.
* Raise your table work height to decrease the chance of neck movement.
* When drinking, use a straw; typical cups and mugs tip the head back.
* When climbing stairs, keep your head level and let your eyes do the work.
* No exercises other than walking, until you get your surgeon’s permission, discuss it at your 6 week appointment.

**Collar and neck care**

* You will be supplied with an additional set of collar pads when fitted with collar.
* Keep your collar inner pads clean for skin comfort, by changing daily.
* If possible get help for the collar change, you need to keep your neck and head still.
* Hand wash your collar pads, then towel and air dry.
* If you will need to change your collar pads on your own, practice the steps before surgery if possible.

**In the Shower**

* Shower, rather than bathe.
* When washing your hair, ensure that your elbows don’t move above shoulder height.
* When finished showering, you can remove the collar (keeping your neck very still) and wipe your neck with a washcloth, dry your collar and change collar pads.
  + When shaving your neck, do not stick out your chin to get the skin taut. Use an electric razor, or accept some stubble.

**Driving**

* **NO** driving until your surgeon states it is safe (typically after 3 months).
* Avoid traveling unnecessarily in a car. You can go home sitting in a car, but need to adjust the headrest to protect your neck from sudden acceleration.
* If you drive prior to your surgeon’s approval, your insurance may be invalid for any accidents.

**Removing Collar**

* When your surgeon gives you permission to remove the collar, progress slowly.
  + E.g.: Start with 15 minutes 3 times per day, then 5 times per day, then try 30 minutes.

**Returning to Work**

* Please speak with your surgeon and your workplace to discuss an appropriate timeline for safe return to work.
* You may want to consider a graduated return to work program depending on your work tasks.

**For more information, contact the Rehabilitation Department at:**

**Queen Elizabeth II Hospital**

**10409 – 98 Street**

**Grande Prairie, AB, T8V 2E8**

# Phone: (780) 538-7360

## Fax: (780) 538-7106

**You can also talk to health professionals 24 hours a day, seven days a week**

**by calling Alberta Health Link toll free at 811**

**Please phone 911 for any emergencies**