

Cervical Fusion Education Plan

Getting Ready to Learn About Cervical Fusion

Learning something new can be hard. It is even harder if you are not feeling well. The purpose of this education plan is for you and the staff to review the following information together. Here are some good things to tell the staff:

- Who you want to learn with you. We would like to have someone who will be helping you at home learn with you.
- The best way for you to learn. Do you learn best by reading a book or pamphlet, or by doing things yourself?
- If you are not feeling well, if you are in pain or you cannot focus on learning right now.

This information is important to your health. We may explain something more than once. We will be giving you information in small bits over several days.

What I Need to Learn About Cervical Fusion

By the time I leave the hospital I will be able to tell the staff:

1. How I will be active and careful after my cervical fusion surgery.
2. How I will care for the incision after my surgery.
3. What I will eat in order to heal from my surgery.
4. How I will manage pain from my surgery.
5. How I will manage other issues I may have after my surgery
6. When I will call the doctor's office or therapy.

The staff will use three questions and answers to teach me about Cervical Fusion:

1. What is my main problem?
2. What do I need to do?
3. Why is this important to me?

The staff will ask me to repeat back important points in my own words, or ask me to show what I have learned. They want to make sure that I know about my condition and how to take care of myself.

[Everyone recovers differently. I need to work with my doctor and therapist to understand how to heal best.]

What is my main problem?

I have just had or will have surgery to fuse or join the vertebra or bones of the spine. The goal of my surgery depends on my problem or injury. Goals of fusion could be:

- to stop movement between the bones that causes pain or numbness.
- to stabilize an injury so the spinal cord is not damaged

I need to know what to do to get well after my cervical fusion surgery.

What do I need to do?

I will be able to tell the staff how I will be active and careful after my surgery.

Activity

- I will not exercise until my doctor or therapist tells me it is OK.
- When it is OK for me to exercise, I will do the exercises my doctor or therapist has ordered. The exercises will help me gain strength.
- I should not bend or twist my neck.
- I may have a limit on how much weight I can lift. I should not lift anything over the amount that the doctor or therapist says is safe for me.

Neck Brace

- I may need to wear a brace for a time. The brace will limit my ability to move my neck. It will give me support and comfort.
- I will be able to tell the staff how to use and care for my neck brace.

I will be able to tell the staff how I will care for my incision after surgery.

- I will keep my incision clean and dry.
- I will wash my hands before I touch my incision or bandage.
- I will look for signs of infection.

Increased tenderness

Swelling
Drainage
Fever
Redness

- I will **not** put my incision under water until cleared by my doctor.
- I will **not** put heat (heating pad, hot water bottle) on my incision until cleared by my doctor.
- I will **not** use ointments, lotions or creams on my incision until cleared by my doctor.
- I will **not** sleep with my pets. I will keep them away from my incision and my bandage.

I will be able to tell the staff what I will eat in order to heal from my surgery.

- Eat at least 2 servings of food rich in protein each day. Foods rich in protein include meats, chicken, turkey, fish, eggs, beans, peas, and peanut butter.
- Eat 3 servings of dairy foods rich in protein. Dairy foods that are rich in protein include yogurt, cheese and milk.
- Eat 5 servings per day of fruits or vegetables. These foods are rich in vitamins that will help my incision heal.

To help keep my bowels working normally while I recover from surgery, I can:

- Eat whole grain breads and cereals. Eat brown or wild rice instead of white rice.
- Add beans, peas, or lentils to soups and casseroles.
- Eat fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Drink plenty of fluids. Set a goal of 6 to 8 cups per day.

I will be able to tell the staff how I will manage my pain from my surgery.

- Take the pills my doctor ordered for me
- Take the pills before my pain is too bad. The medicine may not work as well if I wait too long to take it.
- Call my doctor if I think my pills are not helping or if I feel I am reacting in a bad way to the pills.
- Call my doctor or pharmacist if I have questions about the pills.

Precautions with pain medications

- I will not drive if I am taking pain pills that make me drowsy
- I will tell my doctor if I am taking aspirin or another blood thinner

I will be able to tell the staff how I will manage any other concerns.

- My neck motion is limited from the surgery or from using a neck brace. I will not drive until the doctor gives the OK.
- I should make and keep appointments with my doctor so my doctor can check my progress.

I will be able to tell the staff when I will call the doctor's office or therapy.

- I have a fever
- I have pain I can not control
- I become short of breath (can't get enough air) cough up blood or have chest congestion.
- I have calf pain.
- I have problems swallowing liquids, pills, or food after surgery
- I have more drainage from the incision than I expect.
- I have numbness, feel weak or fall.
- I have bruising or more bleeding than I expect.

Call during office hours if:

- I have questions about my surgery or how I am doing.
- I need to make another appointment to check my progress

Why is this important to me?

I need to follow these instructions to heal from my surgery.

Sometimes, after a neck fusion the vertebrae or bones just above or below the fused section start to move differently to replace the motion lost from the surgery. If I do the exercises and rest a proper amount of time my risk of having problems at the other levels of my spine will be less.

As part of my care and to help me understand cervical fusion surgery, I have received the Cervical Fusion Education Plan. I may also receive:

- Spinal Precautions for Spinal Surgery

- Vendor written instructions on the care and application of a brace.
- Spine Education Guide

Cervical Fusion Education Plan

Resources for Staff

- [Spinal Precautions for Spinal Surgery](#) (look under post surgical precautions)
- [Discharge Instructions for Spinal Fusion](#)- Nursing Reference Center Plus
- [How to Eat After Surgery](#)- Nursing Reference Center Plus

Teaching Tools (Items given to the patient)

- Cervical Fusion Education Plan
- [Spinal Precautions for Spinal Surgery](#) (look under post surgical precautions)
- As part of the plan of care the patient may receive vendor written instructions on the care and application of a brace. (If the patient was given the brace in the operating room or in recovery, the vendors written instructions are likely in the patient's belongings or in the chart.

Content of Teaching: See Education Plan

Always close each teaching session with the question, "What questions do you have for me?"

References:

- [Discharge Instructions for Spinal Fusion](#)- Nursing Reference Center Plus
- [How to Eat After Surgery](#)- Nursing Reference Center Plus

Approved by: Patient Education Council

Authored by: Education Services

Last revision date: May 2015

***This page is intended for staff use only. Do not give to the patient. This document is not a part of the permanent medical record.**