



Davis Spine & Orthopaedics

Spine and Orthopaedic Surgeon
Board Certified and Fellowship Trained
www.DavisSpine.com
331 Oak Manor Drive Suite 201
Glen Burnie, MD 2106
Phone: 410-625-5050 Fax: 410-766-1404

Anterior Cervical Discectomy and Fusion (ACDF) Discharge instructions

When to call 911:

- **If you are experiencing shortness of breath or chest pain, CALL 911**
- **If you are having swallowing problems that interfere with your ability to breathe call 911 and go to the ER. You MUST also contact the office to make us aware of your trip to the ER, we have no other way to know you are there.**

When to call the office: (even if it is after hours)

- **If your temperature exceeds 101.5° F**
- **If your incision begins to separate**
- **If your incision begins to drain more that it did at your time of discharge. If you have drainage that is soaking through your dressing after one hour**
- **If you have an increase in pain, swelling or redness around the incision**
- **If you have difficulty controlling your bowel or bladder (not constipation, the opposite)**

Discomfort:

- After surgery, pain is managed with narcotic medication. Because narcotic pain pills are addictive, they are used for a limited period (**4 to 8 weeks**). As their regular use can cause constipation, drink lots of water and eat high fiber foods. Laxatives (e.g., Dulcolax, Senokot, Milk of Magnesia) can be bought without a prescription. Thereafter, pain is managed with acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol).
- Hoarseness, sore throat, or difficulty swallowing may occur in some patients and **should not be cause for alarm**. These symptoms usually resolve in 1 to 4 weeks.

Restrictions:

- **You MUST wear a cervical collar at all times.** You will be told at your 8 week follow up if it may be removed.
- After a fusion, do **not** use non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) (e.g., ibuprofen, Advil, Motrin, naproxen sodium, Aleve) for 6 months after surgery. NSAIDs may cause bleeding and interfere with bone healing.
- Do **not** smoke. Smoking delays healing and increases the risk of complications (e.g., infection) Smoking can inhibit the bones' ability to fuse.
- Do not drive for 8 to 12 weeks after surgery or until discussed with Dr. Davis.
- Avoid sitting for long periods of time.
- Avoid bending your head forward or backward.
- Do not lift anything heavier than 8 pounds (e.g., gallon of milk).
- Housework and yard-work **are not permitted** until the first follow-up office visit. This includes gardening, mowing, vacuuming, ironing, and loading/unloading the dishwasher, washer, or dryer.

- Postpone sexual activity until your follow-up appointment.

Activity:

- You may need help with daily activities (e.g., dressing, bathing), however, most patients are able to care for themselves right away.
- Gradually return to your normal activities. Walking is encouraged; start with a short distance and gradually increase up to 1 to 2 miles daily.
- Know how to wear your cervical collar before leaving the hospital. **Wear it at all times, including while sleeping.**

Bathing/Incision Care:

- You should change the dressing daily for about two weeks. **Do not apply any creams or ointments for the first 4-6 weeks.**
- Sutures are placed under the skin and will be absorbed by your body. There will be small pieces of adhesive tape superficially, which can be removed in about 14 days . If these become dirty or sticky, they may be removed earlier.
- You may shower 5 to 7 days after surgery. The incision may get wet, pat it dry with sterile gauze. Once dry, cover with a dry sterile dressing. Use the collar given to you in the hospital while showering or bathing.
- No tub baths, hot tubs, or swimming pools until you are told it's safe to do so.

Recovery and prevention:

We will see you for follow up 2 weeks after your surgery. Recovery time generally lasts 6 to 12 weeks with improvement each week. An x-ray order will be given at your 2 week follow up and those films should be taken just before your 8 week follow up. Please bring the films with you to your second (8 week) follow up. They are needed to verify that a fusion is occurring. We will discuss the type of work you do at your follow up visits and we will decide together when to release you back to work.

A cervical collar or brace **must be worn** during recovery to provide support and limit motion while your neck heals or fuses. Dr. Davis may prescribe neck stretches and exercises or physical therapy once your neck has healed.

You likely had bone marrow taken from your hip/pelvic bone, you may experience pain, soreness, and stiffness at the incision. Get up frequently (every 20 minutes) and move around or walk. Don't sit or lie down for long periods of time.

Recurrences of neck pain are common. The key to avoiding recurrence is prevention:

- Proper lifting techniques
- Good posture during sitting, standing, moving, and sleeping
- An ergonomic work area
- Healthy weight and lean body mass
- **No smoking**