



• Zachary T Levine, MD FAANS • Jay W Rhee, MD •

POSTOPERATIVE INFORMATION: ANTERIOR CERVICAL SPINE SURGERY

Dressing:

Please keep wound dressed and dry for 24 to 48 hours. When you remove the dressing do not replace it. There are no staples or sutures to remove. The paper strips, if placed, will come off on their own or will be removed at the first post-op visit. If there is any drainage or excessive redness around the wound, please call the doctor.

Activity:

Please rest the day of surgery. No bending, lifting greater than 5 pounds or twisting until the first postoperative visit. Limit the amount of stair climbing to twice per day. Do not do any prolonged sitting (greater than 45 minutes). If you are given a cervical collar, please wear it until the first post-op visit. You should not drive until seen by the doctor. You may shower on the second postoperative day, but keep the surgical site dry. No soaking in a tub/swimming until seen by the doctor. You may resume your normal diet.

Postoperative Discomfort:

It is common to have pain after any surgery. When approaching the spine from the front, the pain is often felt between the shoulder blades and into the shoulders. This is from the positioning and surgery. It takes 2-3 weeks for this to dissipate. There can be some difficulty with swallowing and soreness of the throat. The esophagus experiences some swelling after the surgery. Using lozenges and drinking fluids while eating will ease this discomfort. This usually improves in 1 week. The arm pain and symptoms that you experienced before surgery should be improved or some circumstances are gone by the first week. Even though the majority of the pain should be gone, there may be some numbness. **This is the last thing to resolve.**

Medication for pain is provided on discharge from the surgery center or hospital. The medication will vary depending on the procedure performed. Make sure that we are aware of any allergies or reactions to pain medications.

If you have any excessive swelling, pain or other symptoms you are concerned about, please call us.

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Postoperative Appointments:

Your first appointment will be 10 days to 20 days after the initial surgery. This will be a routine visit and any further postop questions can be answered. Also a set of X-rays will be ordered for the second visit that will be 4-6 weeks after the surgery. This is to look at the results of the surgery and to check any “hardware” or devices such as a titanium plate or artificial disk.

Additional Therapy:

Often we will send you for additional treatment for strengthening and for pain relief. This is to help get you back to your baseline status. We will find a therapist for you if you do not already have one. Many times additional treatment is not needed.

Questions:

Asking questions is the best way to get information. Please feel free to ask questions about the surgery and what was done. We will try to explain in the best way we can to help you understand what your problem was, how it was treated and what you should expect.

Pain Medication:

We try to supply sufficient pain medication at discharge for the entire post-operative period. If you were referred by a pain management practice, they will supply any additional medication after the postoperative period. Should this not be the case, we will try to find alternative methods after the postoperative period to treat any residual discomfort.

Thank you,

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