

## Home care instructions *P. Ronjon Paul, M.D., Nicholas Mataragas, M.D.*

Surgical Date \_\_\_\_\_

This handout will review the care you need to follow once you are home. If you have any questions or concerns, please ask your nurse or doctor. Our staff is here to help you. If you have questions after you are at home, please call the numbers listed at the end of this handout.

### activity

This is a major surgery and you need to give your body time to heal. Below is a list of instructions that you should follow until your first follow-up visit after surgery.

- Wear your lumbar support brace when out of bed, and when sitting, standing or walking. You need not wear the brace while in bed.
- You no longer need to wear the TED stocking (heavy white stockings) once you are home.
- You may sleep with your brace off either on your back, stomach or side. You may also use pillows for support, when lying on your side. Place pillows behind your back and between your legs. When on your back place pillows underneath your legs.
- You may climb stairs, just try not to over-do.
- You can sit for any length of time based on your comfort level. For your comfort, we suggest that you change your position at least every hour. If you become uncomfortable change your position and activity.
- You should begin a walking program two to three days after surgery.
- You may shower 5 days after surgery without the brace. If you must shower sooner, you must keep the incision covered and dry while showering. No baths for 4 weeks. No hot tubs or swimming for 6 weeks. NO BENDING, TWISTING OR LIFTING

### walking program

This is just a guideline.

*Day 1* Walk the length of the hallway at home 3-4 times, or walk to the end of the driveway and back once in the morning and again in the afternoon or evening.

*Day 2* Walk 1/2 block or the equivalent of a 1/2 block indoors once in the morning and again in the afternoon or evening.

*Day 3* Walk 1 block in the morning and again in the afternoon or evening.

*Day 4* Walk 2 blocks in the morning and again in the afternoon or evening.

*Day 5* Walk 3 blocks in the morning and again in the afternoon or evening. Continue increasing the distance you walk, as you are able. Let your comfort be your guide to how much you can do.

### limitations

- No driving for 2 weeks, or while taking narcotic pain medication. However, you may be a passenger.
- No lifting greater than 10 lbs (about 1 gallon of milk) for the first 5-6 weeks after surgery.
- No bending at the waist, however, you may squat with your knees.
- No sports activity until your first follow-up visit other than the walking program.
- No sexual activity for 2 weeks.

### return to work

Your return to work will depend on your recovery and the type of work you do. You must discuss this with your doctor before you return to work.

### pain management

You may have an occasional increase in back, leg pain and/or numbness after surgery during the healing phase. This is normal and is caused by inflammation (or swelling) of muscle tissue in your low back. To reduce pain there are several approaches to decrease the pain you may be experiencing.

- 1 Ice the low back area for 15-20 minutes every hour for 4 consecutive hours. Do not put the ice directly on your skin. Use a ready made ice pack or put ice in a plastic bag then wrap the ice pack or bag in a towel before you use it. If you have been given a cooling device please use while in bed.
- 2 Avoid sitting for more than 30-60 minutes at a time for the next 48 hours.
- 3 Reduce your activity (i.e. walking) for the next 48 hours.
- 4 Take the pain medicine as directed by your doctor. You can also take one extra strength acetaminophen (Tylenol) every 4 hours between the prescription medicines, only as directed. Do not take more than 4000 mg of Tylenol in a 24 hour period. NOTE: Some narcotic pain medicines also have Tylenol in them.
- 5 **Do not take** the anti-inflammatory drugs (i.e. Ibuprofen, Motrin, Advil, Aleve, Bextra, Celebrex, aspirin) for 3 months following surgery.

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Eventually you should no longer need to use pain medicine. After anterior surgery a feeling of abdominal discomfort may occur. Abdominal discomfort does not pose any serious health problems and usually goes away within 24-48 hours after surgery. Several things that may help to decrease abdominal discomfort are:

- 1 Walking around the house.
- 2 Lie on your back with your feet up on several pillows (above the level of your chest.)
- 3 Gently rub your abdomen.

If abdominal discomfort persists greater than 24-48 hours, contact a member of the staff at the Spine Clinic.

### **incision care**

Caring for your Incision at home is important to prevent infection. Please follow these steps:

- 1 Your incisions have been closed with absorbable suture material underneath the skin and small pieces of surgical tape (steri-strips) on the surface of the skin. In most cases these areas are covered with a dressing. **You may remove the dressing 3-5 days after surgery.**
- 2 The steri-strips will gradually peel away with time as they get wet and this is normal. You may peel off the steri-strips anytime after 10 days.
- 3 Take your temperature twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening for the **first 7 days.**

### **when to call your doctor or nurse**

- If you have a temperature above 101 degrees F (38.8 degrees C) for two readings four hours apart.
- Clear drainage from your incision.
- An increase in pain, redness and/or swelling by your incision.
- Difficulty urinating or controlling your bowel movements.

### **future follow-up visits**

1st Post-op visit: call 630 967 2225 to make your first post-operative appointment at the Spine Center. This usually occurs 2 weeks after your surgical date. All other follow-up visits will be directed by your physician.

### **medications**

*If you need a prescription filled.*

Because your health condition may change over time, your doctor or another provider who has access to your confidential medical records reviews refill requests. By following these simple guidelines, you will avoid any delay in getting your prescription refilled.

- 1 Contact your pharmacy at least 5 days before your prescription requires refilling. To protect your health, pharmacies will accept refill orders only from your doctor. So, when you call DuPage Medical Group with your request an additional step is added. Your prescription will be filled faster if you call your pharmacy directly, they will then contact DuPage Medical Group.
- 2 **Use the same pharmacy.** That way, your pharmacist will have your complete prescription records and you avoid the danger of mixing medications. To make it convenient for you, DuPage Medical Group will work with the pharmacy of your choice. Please choose one pharmacy, and use only that pharmacy. It is an easy way to help protect your health.
- 3 Call your pharmacy early in the day. This gives your doctor time to review your records. To ensure you get the right medications, we do not rush refills without making sure the order and your record are reviewed. Often, physicians are in surgery or finishing with patients late in the day, and we do not want to interrupt those patients' visits, therefore, refill requests received after 3 pm Monday through Thursday or after 10 am Friday will be reviewed and filled the next DuPage Medical Group business day.

*If you run out of medication before you request a refill*

Always call your pharmacy at least 5 days before you run out of medication. This will give the pharmacy plenty of time to contact your doctor, for the doctor to review your record, and for the pharmacist to prepare your medication. All you have to do is watch your medication levels and there should be no reason for you to run out of medication. It is dangerous to "rush" an order. For your protection, refills are not done at night, over the weekend, on holidays or as an emergency if you have forgotten to call your pharmacy.

*If you run out of your medication early*

Your doctor ordered your prescription according to a precise dosage for a prescribed amount of days. If you run out early, it may mean you are experiencing some difficulty with your dosage or medication. Call DuPage Medical Group immediately and explain your difficulty.

*If your prescription is lost, misplaced or stolen:*

To protect your health, lost or stolen prescriptions are replaced only with a physician visit. To avoid possible duplication of prescriptions when an order is lost or stolen, you will want to talk with your doctor. Call DuPage Medical Group to schedule an appointment.