

## 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 operation and you need to give your body time to heal. However, you do not need to stay completely inactive after this operation. Below is a list of activities you should follow. If you have a brace you should follow *step 1* and if you have a soft collar you should follow *step 2*. All the steps after one and two are the same whether you wear a brace or a soft collar.

*Step 1* If you have a brace for the first six weeks after surgery, you must wear your neck brace at all times (even during sleeping). You may remove the brace when you shower. You may shower 2 days after surgery, but keep your incision covered with plastic and replace your collar immediately after showering. When you return for your first follow-up visit you may be given a soft cervical collar to be worn in place of the brace.

*Step 2* If you have a soft collar for the first 2 weeks after surgery, you must wear your soft cervical collar at all times, except when you shower. You may shower 2 days after surgery, but keep the incision covered with plastic. After 2 weeks, use the collar for comfort as needed.

*Step 3* You do not need to wear the TED stocking (heavy white elastic stockings) once you are at home.

*Step 4* No sports activity except for walking and in some cases the use of an exercise bike (NOTE: there are no limits on stair climbing or sitting. Use your comfort level as an indicator of the length of time you are able to sit or climb stairs. Generally a person is comfortable sitting about 1 hour before a change in position or activity is needed.) Sleep either on your back or side. If you have been instructed to wear a brace, sleep with the supportive cushion under the back of your neck.

### **limitations**

- No driving for the first 2 weeks after surgery, while taking narcotic pain medication or while wearing collar or brace.
- No lifting more than 10 lbs (about 1 gallon of milk) for the first 6 weeks.
- No sexual activity for the first week after surgery, after that if comfortable.

### **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.

### **incision care**

Caring for your incision at home is important to prevent infection. Please follow the steps below on incision care.

- Your incision has been closed with suture material under the skin and covered with steri-strips (small pieces of surgical tape) on the skin. The steri-strips will gradually peel off as they get wet and when you take a shower, this is normal and expected.
- Take your temperature twice a day for one week.

### **call your doctor if you have any of the following:**

- A temperature of 101 degrees F or greater for 2 consecutive readings, 4 hours apart.
- An increase in pain, redness or swelling around your incision.
- Clear drainage from your incision.
- A sudden increase in drainage from your incision.

### **pain management**

It is usual after surgery, during the healing period, to have occasional pain, numbness, tingling and/or weakness in your neck or arms. If you have pain once you have returned home there are several things you can do to decrease the pain. First try ice, using the technique below:

#### *Ice technique*

Ice the 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 and then wrap pack or bag in a towel before you use it. You may also need to use pain medicine. If you do need pain medicine, take the medicine you were prescribed as directed. Do not increase the pain medicine dosage without first contacting your doctor or nurse. Eventually you should no longer need to use pain medicine. However, if your pain continues, you should call the clinic. Avoid taking non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS) for 3 months following surgery. Examples include ibuprofen (generic name), Motrin or Advil (brand name), Celebrex and aspirin. Also avoid smoking and limit exposure to cigarette smoke and products containing nicotine. If you have a bone stimulator, follow the instructions given to you.

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

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

1st Post-op visit: call 630 967 2225 to make your first post-operative appointment at the Spine Clinic if not already made. This usually occurs 2 weeks after your surgical date.

All other follow-up visits will be instructed 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 *Always 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.

*P. Ronjon Paul, M.D., Nicholas Mataragas, M.D.*

DuPage Medical Group Spine Center 630 967 2225