



## Houston MicroNeurosurgery

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### **Patient Instructions after Anterior Cervical Discectomy and Fusion**

**Collar** – You will wake up after the surgery wearing a rigid plastic collar known as a Philadelphia or Miami collar. Depending on the type of your surgery, you will either receive a second rigid collar or a soft foam collar before you get discharged from the hospital. If you receive two rigid collars, you must wear one at all times (even when you sleep), and switch them back and forth to clean and wash them. If you receive a soft collar, you can wear that at night, but you should wear the rigid collar during the day. Some patients get switched to a soft collar entirely after the first week. You will wear your collar for six weeks after the surgery.

**Living with the Collar** – You can remove the collar when you take a shower. Men may remove the collar temporarily to shave, but should not shave on the incision. For one or two hours a day, you may sit in a tall-backed chair that supports your neck and take your collar off. You may sleep in the collar in any position you want: on your back, side or belly. For the first week after the surgery, while the throat is still swollen, some people find it more comfortable to sleep in a recliner or place several pillows under their head and shoulders. *You must not drive with a collar, since you will not be able to look around and be a safe driver.* Relax your neck and shoulder muscles while you wear the collar. There is no reason to worry about moving your neck: the collar will limit excessive movement.

**Activity** – Walk as much as you can, as soon as you can after surgery. Do not lift anything heavier than 10 lb for the first week. You should be able to take care of yourself (shower, make meals, etc.) the day after the surgery and usually would not need someone to stay with you.

**Pain Medications** – You will receive prescriptions for pain medications upon discharge from the hospital. Take these medications only if you have pain. Try to reduce your intake of pain medications and get off them as soon as you can. You may take Tylenol or anti-inflammatory drugs (Motrin, Aleve, Celebrex, Vioxx, Bextra, etc.) instead of your narcotic pain medication. Do not take Tylenol with your pain medications, since most prescribed pain medications already have Tylenol in them. If you require a refill on your pain medication, call it in to the pharmacy and allow for a 24-hour turn-around time from our office. If you request refills on pain medications too frequently, or for too long after the surgery, they may not be approved.

**Other Medications** – Take all your medications (except aspirin and blood thinners) as you were taking them before the surgery. You can take your aspirin starting 3 days after surgery. If you take a blood thinner such as coumadin, make sure to ask Dr. Pakzaban about it.

**Return to Work** – You may return to a non-physical type of job whenever you feel well. Realistically, this is usually 1-2 weeks after the surgery. You must not drive or operate machinery if you are still taking pain medications. Those who perform physical work generally stay off work for six weeks after the surgery until they come out of the collar.

**Driving** – Do not drive for the six weeks during which you wear the collar. Do not drive while on pain medications. You may ride in a car as a passenger as soon after the surgery as you wish. If you go for a long trip in the first month after surgery, stop once an hour and walk around for 5 minutes.

**Bathing** – You may take a shower the day after surgery, and may get your incision(s) wet. Remove your bandage(s) before the shower, but do not remove the Steri-Strips (little white “butterfly” tapes) under the bandage. You should not submerge your incision under water (e.g. in a swimming pool or bath tub) until your incision has completely healed (about 3 weeks).

**Care of Incision** – You can remove your bandage(s) one day after surgery. Do not remove the Steri-Strips: they will begin to peel off about 2 weeks after surgery. Do not put any ointments on the incision until the Steri-Strips come off. After that, you can gently rub your incision with an antibiotic ointment or an ointment containing vitamin E, once per day. You do not have to put a bandage back on, but you may do so if you wish.

**Watch for Infection** – Call us if you develop a fever greater than 101 degrees, or redness around the incision(s), or pus coming out of the incision(s). Check your incision(s) once per day. Swelling and bruising around the incisions are normal, especially around the hip incision, if you have one. A small amount of bloody drainage is O.K., but pus coming from the incision(s) should be reported to Dr. Pakzaban immediately.

**Follow-up Appointment** – Call the office to arrange for a follow-up appointment soon after surgery. The first follow-up visit usually occurs within 7 – 10 days after surgery. This is a brief visit during which Dr. Pakzaban will check your incision, ask about your symptoms, review your drug intake, and answer any questions or concerns that you may have.

**Physical Therapy** – Most people will not require physical therapy after this operation, unless they have significant weakness in the arms or imbalance in the legs. If a couple of weeks after coming out of the collar you still feel stiff in your neck, call us up to get a referral for P.T.

Call us during office hours for routine questions. For urgent problems, Dr. Pakzaban can be paged at nights and on weekends.

Have a good recovery.

Peyman Pakzaban, M.D.