

Cervical Disc Arthroplasty

Patient post-operative instructions

Typical hospital course

Often 1 night in the hospital, although some patients go home the same day depending on pain control, walking, and swallowing.

Key limits / reminders

A soft collar is usually used for 2 weeks and then removed. Gentle neck motion is usually allowed. Avoid heavy exercise or impact activity for about 6 weeks.

Before surgery

- Bring a loose-fitting shirt that is easy to put on after surgery.
- If you have a long beard, trim it before surgery so the front neck dressing can seal well.
- Use any pre-op cleansing soap and medication instructions exactly as directed.

After surgery

- Neck soreness, temporary swallowing irritation, and some pain between the shoulder blades can happen early after surgery.
- A small drain may be present overnight and is usually removed before discharge.
- Dissolvable sutures are commonly used.

Incision and showering

- Keep the dressing clean and dry. Call if it becomes saturated, peels off, or you are unsure how to change it.
- Showering is allowed if the incision and dressing stay dry. No soaking in a tub, pool, or hot tub until cleared.

Brace and activity

- A soft collar is usually used for 2 weeks and then removed.
- You may gently turn and nod your head as tolerated unless you were given different instructions.
- Walking is encouraged right away. Avoid impact exercise, heavy lifting, and strenuous activity for about 6 weeks.

Medications, diet, driving, and work

- Pain medicine is usually tapered over 1 to 3 weeks.
- Tylenol and NSAIDs are usually acceptable after disc replacement unless another physician has told you not to take them.
- Soft foods may be easier for the first 24 to 48 hours if swallowing is irritated.
- Do not drive while taking opioid pain medication or muscle relaxers.

Follow-up

- Typical follow-up is around 2 weeks, 8 weeks, 14 weeks then again later for x-rays and motion assessment.

Constipation

- Opioid pain medication commonly causes constipation. Start a stool softener and/or gentle laxative if needed, drink fluids, and stop these medicines if you develop loose stools or diarrhea.
- If you go several days without a bowel movement despite over-the-counter treatment, call the office.

Smoking / nicotine

- Avoid smoking and nicotine while you are healing. It can increase the risk of wound problems and slow recovery.

Call right away for

- Increasing pain that is not controlled with the prescribed medication plan.
- New or worsening weakness, numbness, tingling, loss of balance, or new trouble using your arms or legs.
- Redness, swelling, warmth, drainage, or a bad smell from the incision.
- Fever of 101 F or higher.
- Inability to urinate, loss of bowel or bladder control, or new saddle numbness.
- New calf pain or swelling, chest pain, coughing up blood, or shortness of breath.

Questions or concerns: call the office. For chest pain, severe shortness of breath, or another emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department.