

Discharge Instructions Thoracolumbar Fusion

Activity

- Arrange your household to keep the items you need within reach.
- Remove electrical cords, throw rugs, and anything else that may cause you to fall.
- Use nonslip bath mats, grab bars, an elevated toilet seat, and a shower chair in your bathroom.
- Use a walker or cane (as instructed) until your balance, flexibility, and strength improve. And remember to ask for help from others when you need it.
- Free up your hands so that you can use them to keep balance. Do this by using a fanny pack, apron, or pockets to carry things. Be sure not to carry too much at once.
- Use chairs with arms. The arms make it easier for you to stand up and sit down. Do not sit with hips below the knees.
- Don't bend or twist at the waist, raise your hands over your head, reach above head for objects for the first 2 week(s) after your surgery.
- Don't lift anything heavier than 15 pounds for the first 2 week(s) after surgery. After this you may increase to 25 pounds.
- Don't sit for more than 30 to 45 minutes at a time. Take frequent short walks. They are the key to your recovery.
- Nap if you are tired, but don't stay in bed all day.
- Don't drive for one week. And never drive while you are taking opioid pain medicine.

Incision care

- Check your incision daily or have someone check for you. Look for redness, tenderness, or drainage.

- Avoid soaking your wound in water (no hot tubs, bathtubs, swimming pools) until your doctor says it's OK.
- Wait 2 day(s) after your surgery to begin showering. Then shower as needed. Carefully wash your incision with soap and water. Gently pat it dry. Don't rub the incision, or apply creams or lotions to it. To avoid falling while showering, use a shower stool. If Dermabond dressing was applied may shower same day as surgery.
- Remove the dressing after 48 hours.

Other home care

- Take your pain medicine exactly as directed.
- Don't take nonsteroidal, anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen or naproxen, unless directed by your doctor. They may delay or prevent proper fusion of the spine.
- Continue to wear the support stockings you were given in the hospital. Wear them as instructed by your doctor.
- Wear your back brace when you are up greater than 45 degrees for more than 10 minutes. If the brace is too uncomfortable sitting you may remove the brace to sit.
- Keep all appointments for physical therapy. During your hospital stay, you should have been given instructions about physical therapy. If not, ask your doctor.

Follow-up

- Make a follow-up appointment with your healthcare provider, or as advised.
- Keep appointments for X-rays. They will be taken periodically to check the status of your spinal fusion.

When to Call

Call 911 right away if you have any of the following:

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath

Otherwise, call your doctor right away if any of these occur:

- Increased pain or pain not relieved by medicine
- New weakness or gait difficulty
- Pain or swelling in the arms or legs
- Numbness, tingling, or blue-gray color of your arm or fingers
- Fever above 100.4°F (38.0°C) or shaking chills
- Increased swelling or redness around the incision
- Drainage or oozing around the incision
- Nausea or vomiting

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