

Spine Surgery Discharge Instructions

The page numbers listed refer to pamphlet 1732, *Before and After Spine Surgery - Halifax Infirmary*. Ask a member of your health care team for a copy of this pamphlet, or visit: www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/1732

Controlling pain (see page 25)

- Take 1000 mg of acetaminophen (Tylenol®) every 6 hours when awake.
- Take a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID) (like Celebrex®, ibuprofen or Advil®) following the directions on the package. **Do not** take this medication if a health care provider has told you not to.
- Medications prescribed by my surgery team:

- _____ Take next dose at: _____
- _____ Take next dose at: _____
- Your prescriptions are available online. Please call your pharmacy to have your prescriptions filled when you are discharged from the hospital.
- Paper copy of prescription given

Preventing constipation (not being able to poop) (see page 20)

- If you are taking prescription pain medication (like Tylenol® No. 3, hydromorphone) and/or you are constipated, you may need to take medications (like laxatives or stool softeners) to help you poop.

Restarting anticoagulant (blood thinner) medication stopped before surgery

- Medication: _____ Start taking it on: _____

Caring for your incision (cut) (see page 26)

- My incision is closed with:
 - Skin glue
 - Stitches that do not dissolve
 - Stitches that dissolve (go away on their own)
 - Staples

Bandage type: _____

- If there is no drainage from the incision, you can take the bandage off 72 hours (3 days) after your surgery.
 - › Leave the incision open to the air. Keep it dry and clean.
 - › If you have Steri-Strips™ (strong pieces of tape) over the incision, they will fall off on their own in 7 to 10 days.
- If the incision is draining clear, reddish fluid, you can leave the bandage on until it stops.
 - › Change the bandage when it is more than half full of fluid.
- Extra bandage supplies given

Activity

- **Bathing:** You can shower 72 hours (3 days) after your surgery. **Do not soak in a tub, hot tub, or pool until your incision is fully healed.** This is usually in about 14 days (2 weeks). You can get the incision wet in the shower, but **do not** spray water directly on it, wash it, or rub it (see page 26).
- **Driving:** Follow the directions given to you by your surgeon (see page 27).
- **Exercise:** The best activity after your surgery is walking. Walk for as long and as far as you are comfortable. Try to gradually do more activity each day for the first 6 to 8 weeks after surgery, or until your follow-up appointment with your surgeon (see page 29).
- **Lifting:** **Do not** lift or push anything that weighs more than 10 pounds for 6 to 8 weeks (1½ to 2 months) after surgery or until your follow-up appointment with your surgeon (see page 31).

Call your spine nurse case manager or your surgeon right away if you have any of these symptoms:

- Fever (temperature above 38 °C or 100.4 °F) or chills/shaking
- Nausea (feeling sick to your stomach) or vomiting (throwing up)
- Drainage from the incision that has a bad smell
- Edges of the incision come apart or a hard lump forms under the incision
- **More** redness, swelling, or warmth around the incision
 - › Some redness around the incision is a normal part of the healing process.
- You cannot control your bowels or bladder and you do not know why
- You see blood in your urine (pee)
- Your bladder feels full and you are not able to urinate (pee)
- Pain that does not get better even with pain medication
- Pain, redness, swelling, tenderness, or warmth in **either** leg that does not go away after moving or massaging the area
- Trouble breathing
- Chest pain

If you cannot reach your spine nurse case manager or your surgeon, call 911 or go to the nearest Emergency Department right away.

Follow-up appointment

My follow-up appointment is with Dr: _____ in _____ weeks.

My surgeon: _____ Phone: _____

Spine nurse case manager

- › Phone (office): 902-473-8616
- › Email: spinenursing@nshealth.ca
- › Hours: 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday to Friday (closed on holidays)

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.