

## Patient Discharge Instructions:

# Spinal Fusion

### Diet

- You may resume the type of diet you had before surgery. Eating a well-balanced diet is important for proper wound healing. The doctor or nurse will let you know if you need a specific diet or food consistency.

### Medications

- Your doctor will provide you with prescriptions for the medication you are to take at home. You may fill your prescriptions at the UCLA Outpatient Pharmacy, or you can have them filled at a pharmacy closer to your home.
- Before your discharge, your nurse will review with you and write down your medication dosage, schedule, and side effects. It is important to take your medications as ordered and try to stay on schedule.
- Do not take aspirin or blood thinners unless ordered or cleared by your surgeon.

### Comfort and Pain Management

- It is common to have a headache/pain after surgery, which may last a few days or a few weeks.
- You will have pain medications prescribed by your doctor for your pain management. The medication may be irritating to the stomach lining, it is advisable to take it with a teaspoon of applesauce or non-fat yogurt.
- Pain medication (narcotics) may cause constipation. Use a stool softener or gentle laxative if this occurs. If the medications are ineffective, call your doctor's office to discuss on-going pain management.

### Expectations for Home

- You should clarify who will be picking you up on the day of your surgery (if outpatient), or on the day of your discharge (before 11:00 am, if inpatient).

### Overview of Daily Activities

- You may feel more tired for 1-3 weeks after surgery. Make sure to get plenty of rest.
- You should walk 2-4 times a day, with a short gradual increase in your daily activities.
- When you see your surgeon in the follow-up appointment, he or she will discuss decreasing the limits on activity at that time. **You must have clearance from your doctor before participating in any strenuous exercises/activity.**

### Activity Restrictions

- Do **not** lift anything over 5 pounds (including pets or children).
- Do **not** bend or twist your back.
- You may sit in a straight back chair (90 degrees) for about 10 minutes to eat. Otherwise, the preferred positions are standing, walking, lying down or sitting in a recliner (approximately 45 degrees).

## Resume to Work/Driving/Air Travel

- You must have clearance from your doctor before returning to work or flying.** This will be discussed at your post-operative visit.
- Do not drive until you are cleared by your surgeon. Do not drive while you are on prescription pain medications.

## Wound/Suture Care

- Keep your incision clean and dry at all times.
- Your surgeon may ask you to cover the incision site with Tegaderm film or you can also use Press'n Seal® plastic wrap that can be found at a drug or grocery store. Each time you shower, your incision/dressing must be kept dry. Staples/sutures will be removed approximately two weeks after your surgery by a physician, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner.
- When showering, please be gentle on the skin around the incision and allow the scabs to fall off themselves.
- No soaking in hot tubs, baths, swimming pools, or Jacuzzi until your incision is completely healed.
- If staples or superficial sutures were used, you may shower 72 hours after your surgery. If no staples were used (if steri-strips or dermabond/skin glue was applied for your incision) you may shower 48 hours after the day of your surgery.
- Do **not** use any ointments (including antibacterial ointments) over the incision site.

## Follow-up Appointment

- You should be seen in our clinic approximately 2 weeks after your surgery. The physician who discharges you from the hospital will make sure you have a follow up appointment scheduled with your surgeon.
- You may receive surveys from your surgeon and/or hospital. Please take the time to complete these surveys. We appreciate your honest feedback.

## Rehabilitation Needs

- Our rehabilitation professionals will assess you prior to your discharge. Any rehabilitation needs and equipment will be arranged prior to your discharge.

## Signs to Watch for at Home

- Call your doctor or go to the Emergency Room if you are experiencing any of the symptoms below:**
  - Any redness, drainage, heat or pain, or increased swelling around your incision site
  - Sudden weakness in your arms or legs
  - Persistent fever
  - For life-threatening emergencies that cannot wait, please go to the nearest Emergency Room for immediate evaluation or dial 911

## CONTACT INFORMATION

During business hours, please call UCLA Neurosurgery: **310-825-5111**. Ask to speak with your surgeon.

After business hours, please call the UCLA page operator: **310-825-6301**. Ask to have the neurosurgical resident on call contacted for urgent questions.

In case of an emergency, report to your closest Emergency Room or call **911**.