

Incision Care Dressing:

- ✓ Always wash your hands before and after touching your incision. If someone else is caring for your incision, they should always wash their hands before and after care.
- ✓ Remove your dressing **5 days after surgery**
- ✓ Leave open to air if there is no drainage. If there is drainage, cover with 4x4s and paper tape daily until there is no longer drainage. You can buy these at CVS, Rite Aid or Walgreens.
- ✓ Keep incision clean and dry.
- ✓ Check your incision daily.
 - Contact your surgeon's office if you notice: increased redness, swelling, drainage, opening, warmth, foul odor, or fever of 100.4F or higher.

Incision Care Showering:

- ✓ ***You may shower with your dressing. Be sure the tegaderm dressing is intact prior to the shower.***
- ✓ ***If the dressing gets wet, replace with 4x4 gauze against incision and tegaderm over the gauze. You can purchase this at RiteAid, CVS, Walgreens.***
- ✓ Do not submerge the incision. No baths, hot tubs, or swimming for 6 weeks or until advised by your surgeon.
- ✓ Shower daily.
- ✓ Once the dressing is removed, use a mild soap for 45-60 days. Do not use bar soap because of bacteria and sharing with other family members.
- ✓ Use a clean towel and wash cloth EACH time you shower.
- ✓ Do not use a washcloth directly on your incision. Do NOT share with family members.
- ✓ Gently clean around incision first, then the rest of the body.
- ✓ Rinse well without directly spraying the incision and be sure no soap residue remains. Do not scrub or rub incision.
- ✓ When drying, pat incision dry with a clean towel. Do this first, then dry the rest of your body. Do not re-touch your incision.
- ✓ Put on clean clothes and underclothes daily after each shower.
- ✓ Leave incision open to air if it is not draining.

Incision Care General:

- ✓ Do NOT use lotions, antibiotic creams, peroxide, rubbing alcohol, Vitamin E, or other lotions or creams on your incision for at least 6 weeks after surgery or until the incision is completely healed. Discuss any questions with your surgeon.
- ✓ Do not show off your incision to your family or friends.
- ✓ Apply a clean sheet over any recliner or sofa that you use.
- ✓ Change the sheets on your bed at least weekly, or sooner if soiled.
- ✓ Wear clean clothes daily.
- ✓ Brush your teeth or dentures daily

Incision Closure:

- ✓ You may have small strips of tape over your incision. These may fall off on their own after surgery. If they do not fall off on their own, you may gently remove them 14 days after surgery.
- ✓ You may have incisional glue over your incision. This will naturally flake off the skin. Do NOT pick at it.
- ✓ You may have staples or sutures that will need to be removed at your next follow up visit. If you are unable to come due to distance, they may be removed by your PCP 14 days after surgery. If you are discharged to a facility and will not be able to attend your next appointment, the staples may be removed 14 days after surgery. Contact your surgeon's office with any questions.

Hand Washing:

- ✓ Diligent hand washing is the best way to prevent infection. Have family and friends wash their hands when visiting or helping with dressing changes.
- ✓ Wash your hands:
 - Before and after meals.
 - After sneezing or coughing
 - After using the bathroom
 - Before and after touching your incision
 - After touching your pets

Pets:

- ✓ Pets are considered family members and a very important part of the family.
- ✓ It's important to remember that pets carry germs on their fur that can infect your incision.
- ✓ You can show affection to your pet but DO NOT:
 - Let your pet near your surgical site even if it's covered with a dressing or clothing
 - Let your pet on your bed, chair, or lap while the incision is healing.

Spinal Surgery Precautions and Activity

Follow your spinal precautions for 12 weeks or until your surgeon tells you it is okay to stop.

No "BLT" or "double P"

No Bending

- ✓ No bending your back forward or backwards.

No Lifting

- ✓ Do not lift anything weighing more than 5-10 pounds. A gallon of milk weighs approximately 8.5 pounds.
- ✓ This includes a child, heavy grocery bags and milk containers, a heavy briefcase or backpack, cat litter or dog food bags, or a vacuum cleaner.

No Twisting

Following Cervical Surgery

- ✓ Do not twist your neck.
- ✓ Keep your head up straight and keep your ears and shoulders lined up.

Following Lumbar Surgery

- ✓ Do not twist your trunk.
- ✓ Keep your shoulders and hips lined up

Avoid Pushing and Pulling

- ✓ Don't pull yourself out of bed or allow someone else to pull you up.
- ✓ Log roll when getting out of bed.
- ✓ Don't pull up on the handrail when climbing the stairs
- ✓ Avoid reaching.

Activities**Sleeping**

- ✓ Log roll to the side to get out of bed
- ✓ Change your position frequently, about every 30-60 minutes.
- ✓ You may sleep on your back or your side. Do not sleep on your stomach. When sleeping on your side, keep a pillow between your legs to keep your spine in neutral alignment.

Walking

- ✓ Walk, walk, walk!!! You should walk at least once per hour while awake.
- ✓ Take short frequent walks every day. Gradually increase your walking distance as tolerated. If you have not been physically active start slow. Start with 10 minutes of walking daily. Add 10 minutes to your walk each week until you are walking /moving for an hour each day.
- ✓ Walk on flat surfaces.
- ✓ Rest when you feel tired. Getting enough sleep will help you recover.

Stairs

- ✓ You may climb stairs. Initially, limit the number of times you climb the stairs per day. Take your time going up and down the stairs. Make sure to place your entire foot on the step carefully

Driving

- ✓ Do not drive for at least 2 weeks. You should not drive while taking pain medication.
- ✓ You may ride in a car, but limit extended travel. If a trip is longer than 30-60 minutes, you should get out frequently to take a small walk and stretch.

Work/Other

- ✓ Do not return to work until you are cleared by your surgeon. The surgeon will determine your readiness.
- ✓ Your surgeon will let you know if you need outpatient PT or OT at your follow up visit.

- ✓ Your surgeon will let you know when you can resume your normal activities at your follow up visit.
- ✓ Avoid strenuous activities such as bicycle riding, jogging, weightlifting, or aerobic exercise until your doctor says it is okay.
- ✓ Try to change your position every 30 minutes while sitting or standing. This will help to decrease pain while healing.
- ✓ You may have sex as soon as you feel able, avoid positions that put stress on you or cause pain.

Medications/Pain Management

- ✓ **Only take medications for pain/spasms AS NEEDED, and as prescribed. Hold if drowsy.**
- ✓ **Do NOT take your pain medication and muscle relaxer at the same time.** Space them by at least one hour.
- ✓ Continue to use ice packs at home for pain relief.

Diet

- ✓ You can eat your normal diet. If your stomach is upset, try bland, low-fat foods like plain rice, broiled chicken, toast, and yogurt.
- ✓ Drink plenty of fluids (unless advised not to by your doctor).

Assessing Your Recovery

RED LIGHT

STOP/EMERGENCY

Go to the Emergency Department or call 911 if you have any of the following:

- ☐ Difficulty in breathing or shortness of breath
- ☐ Chest pain
- ☐ Localized chest pain with coughing or when taking deep breath

YELLOW LIGHT

CAUTION

Call your surgeon's office if you have any of the following:

- ☐ Fever of 101.0 °F
- ☐ Increased redness, heat, drainage or swelling around the incision
- ☐ Increased pain or significant decrease in motion during activity and at rest
- ☐ Increased swelling, pain or tenderness of the thigh, calf, ankle or foot
- ☐ Abnormal bleeding of any kind, such as increased bleeding from the incision, or nosebleed, etc.
- ☐ Blood in urine

GREEN LIGHT

ALL IS GOOD

When your symptoms are under control you experience:

- ☐ No difficulty in breathing or flu-like symptoms
- ☐ No chest pain
- ☐ No abnormal bleeding or drainage from the incision site
- ☐ Slight pain and swelling is to be expected during healing process