

Post Surgical Spine Care

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While each surgery is unique there are some universal guidelines that, Southern Orthopaedic Surgeons follow regarding post-operative spine care.

Below is what you can expect after your spine surgery.



MEDICATIONS:

Expect a prescription for medication upon discharge from the hospital. Please follow the instructions for administration closely, and call our nursing staff if you experience problems taking your medication. REMEMBER: Do not take arthritis medications (NSAIDs) for at least three months after all fusion surgeries. These include Motrin, Aleve, Advil, Naprosyn, and Daypro. Females may restart hormones the first week at home.

Antibiotics - Take them until the bottle is completely finished if prescribed.

Prescription refills - Make requests before 4:00 p.m. through our office. Because we do not have access to patient records except during business hours, NO NARCOTIC PRESCRIPTION PAIN MEDICINES will be provided after 4:00 p.m. or on weekends or holidays.

FOLLOW UP APPOINTMENTS:

Unless otherwise indicated by your physician, your first post operative appointment will be approximately six (6) weeks following your surgery. Most often, an appointment will be made at the time of discharge from the hospital. If not, please call our office between the hours of 7:00 am – 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday to schedule this appointment. Calls received before 3:00 pm will be returned that same day.

INCISION CARE:

Check your incision at least twice daily for the first two (2) weeks for any sign of infection. These signs include increased warmth or redness to the area, swelling, discharge, or unexplained increasing pain in the incision not relieved by bed rest or local application of ice, five (5) to ten (10) minutes, three (3) times per day.

DRESSING CHANGES:

You may change the dressing the day after you return home. A small amount of reddish-brown drainage is not unusual for 1 to two (2) days. Please report any other type or amount of drainage to our office. The dressing may be discontinued 24 hours after your incision stops draining or spotting. Showers may begin the day after surgery. You may take tub baths two (2) weeks after surgery. If your surgeon used Steri-Strips, (adhesive skin closures), they should be kept on the incision until 14 days following the surgery. You may shower as the protocol for your particular surgery permits. Remember to gently dry the incision area / Steri-Strips. It is common for the edges of the strips to loosen and curl. Simply clip the frayed edges but leave the strips on for 14 days unless they are so loose they are obviously no longer functional. In this case, you may gently lift off the strips, but do not pull or jerk to remove them. Do not apply cream / ointments to the incision.

PAIN EXPECTATIONS:

After all surgeries, inflammation is a natural process of healing. While we can take the "edge" off your pain, we cannot and do not want to block this process.

1. A sore throat often occurs after intubation for anesthesia.
2. **Lumbar fusion** - occasional low back pain for three (3) to six (6) months with gradual resolution.
3. **Cervical surgery** - predictable muscle pain for up to 6 weeks post after surgery.

With each day that passes, you will get stronger and oftentimes, must simply be patient as nature clicks off days on the calendar. You need to be encouraged by the "good days" as the "bad days" get further apart.

REMEMBER:

Call our office immediately if you:

- Have drainage and / or odor from your wound.
- Have increased redness / swelling at the incision site, or unexplained increasing incision pain not relieved by bed rest.
- Have fever greater than 101 degrees with sweats or chills.
- Have new or unfamiliar pain or weakness in the arms or legs.
- Have difficulty with urination or bowel movements, pain or numbness in the rectal, vaginal or scrotal area.