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ACDF Postoperative Instructions

Congratulations! You're through surgery. Now it's time to recover. Below is a list of instructions for management at home.

Incision:

- Keep the incision clean and dry. You may shower but avoid direct water pressure to the dressing and do not submerge in water such as swimming or bathing. If the dressing becomes wet at all, pat dry with a towel.
- Maintain your dressing for two weeks. Your stitches are under the skin and will dissolve over time. There is a layer of surgical glue over the incision which will slowly begin to peel off on its own. Do not try to peel it off yourself. If your dressing falls off you can cover it with a small over-the-counter bandage. You can remove the dressing on your own at 2 weeks.

Collar:

- Unless otherwise instructed, your collar is for use when outside the home for the first two weeks (e.g. when walking or in a car). It can be removed when at home around the house.
- You may wear the collar for comfort at home if your muscles begin to tire out and you feel more comfortable in it at the end of the day. After two weeks, you may remove the collar.

Activity:

- Avoid extremes of bending or turning your neck and avoid lifting anything more than 5 pounds (~half gallon of milk).
- We want you up and walking as much as you feel comfortable (around the house and even short walks outside the house).
- Try to maintain your neck in a neutral position. You may sleep however is most comfortable – on your side or on your back is okay. The first night sleep with your head propped up (i.e. in a recliner or with more pillows than normal).
- Avoid driving for two weeks and you are out of your collar. Prior to getting back on the road, we recommend practicing somewhere safe (e.g. empty parking lot) to ensure that you are comfortable with some neck motion and seeing your blindspot so you can drive safely. Do NOT drive if you are taking any medications that would impair your ability (e.g. opioids, muscle relaxants).
- Avoid tobacco products or other smoking which can increase the risk non-healing

When to call us:

- Fever > 101F with redness and any pus from the incision
- Opening of the incision with significant drainage
- Concern for blood clot in the leg (increased pain, swelling, warmth/redness in legs or chest pain/shortness of breath)
- Any new or worsening neurologic changes (numbness, tingling, weakness, any change in balance, loss of bowel/bladder control)
- Any other symptoms of concern