

# TOTAL DISC REPLACEMENT: POST OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

Your surgery involves the placement of implants that aid in maintaining the motion of two or more separate vertebral bones. This is done by securing the bones with metal and plastic implants that allow proper range of motion. We place graft between the bone and metal plate to encourage healing in the surgical area.

When your surgery is complete, your vertebrae will be fixed, but will still maintain proper range of motion. Remember that internally, you are not healed until six weeks from surgery. Skin and muscle heal much quicker while bone healing takes longer. For that reason, you must protect your surgical area and keep the stress on the area to a minimum. You should eat healthy and stay away from medications that slow bone healing. Poorly controlled medical problems and exposure to tobacco can also reduce your body's ability to heal. **With this in mind, please follow the instructions below to the best of your ability.**

## Before Surgery:

- 1) Make sure you **do NOT** take any anti-inflammatory medication or blood thinners for the **7 days prior** to your surgery date.
- 2) **Men, please shave** your neck prior to arriving at the hospital for surgery
- 3) After surgery, you may have to choose to go home, to inpatient rehabilitation, or to another inpatient facility, such as skilled nursing. **Please discuss these options** with your family before surgery. Also inform your hospital nurses after surgery so that you may have a smooth transition when leaving the hospital.
- 4) **If you have NOT already had your first post-operative appointment scheduled**, please call the office and schedule your first post-operative appointment. It should be 10-14 days after your surgery.

## Immediately after surgery:

- 1) **Keep your bandage on until your first visit with us, 10-14 days after your surgery.** It was placed in the operating room when your surgical area was clean. This bandage keeps any moisture and debris out of the surgical area and assists in preventing infection.
- 2) **Sponge-bathe only.** If the bandage starts to come off, you can reinforce the edges with tape. If it is peeling off more than that, **call us** and protect the incisions with dry gauze and tape.
- 3) **No driving** until after your first post-op appointment.

## For six (6) weeks after surgery:

- 1) **Please try to walk upright.** Use a **soft cervical collar if needed** and continue as long as you need. **It is very important for you to avoid falls and stumbles.** Your implants are designed to support you the best while in an upright position.
- 2) **Limit the amount of bending, twisting, and lifting (>25 lbs.) that you do.** In the first six weeks, when your muscle is weak and recovering, a lot of that stress will be transferred to your surgery area. It is in your best interest to not overwork yourself. This will allow your implants to as much time as they need to heal.

(see next page)

- 3) **Please do NOT do any type of physical therapy, unless you have called us and we have specifically approved it.** Please inform other providers of this. **There is NO physical therapy for a minimum of six (6) weeks.** Your only exercise should be walking upright, with as much support from a walker as you need. You can walk at a brisk pace if you would like. Sitting for long periods is ok as long as it does not make you too uncomfortable. You do NOT want to prematurely stress and loosen the implants in your pelvis. Once your muscles recover, the load on your implants is much less.
- 4) **Constipation** after surgery is very common. Narcotic medications can increase constipation. Use any standard **over the counter laxative** and try to stop the use of narcotic medication if possible.
- 5) Some patients experience some **difficulty swallowing, voice changes, or swelling the area** after surgery. These symptoms are all normal and should resolve in the following weeks. If you are having difficulty swallowing, please consume thicker liquids such as yogurt, smoothies, shushes, and pudding, to prevent choking.
- 6) Wear your shirts **loose**, so that they do not rub the incision area.
- 7) It is important that you get **GOOD NUTRITION** after surgery to help with the healing of your incisions and the bone. Make sure you take a **multivitamin, iron and calcium** after your surgery. You may not have much of an appetite, but it is very important that you get good nutrition. You may want to drink a **nutritional supplement like Boost or Ensure.**
- 8) **For diabetics, maintain excellent control of your blood sugar.** This will help you avoid infections and improve the chance of successful bone healing.
- 9) **If possible, STOP SMOKING,** and stay away from smokers. **Heavy smoke exposure severely limits your ability to heal bone.**
- 10) If you need post-operative pain medications and you do NOT have an established pain management physician, it is likely that we will be providing you with post-operative pain medications. Confirm that your medication is sent to your pharmacy before surgery. **Please take your post-operative medication as directed on the bottle. If you feel that the medication is not helping enough or you need a refill, please call our office.**

Remember, you have just had a significant amount of surgery that will require healing. Try your best to stay away from strenuous or dangerous activity and call us if you have any questions.

These instructions should answer any of the questions you may have regarding your post-operative instructions or concerns. If you had additional questions that were not addressed, please do not hesitate to call our office.

Thanks and we wish you Happy Healing,

**Brazos Spine**