



Cervical Fusion or Cervical Arthroplasty

What to expect after surgery

- You will go home the same day if you have a three level or less fusion and will be required to stay in the recovery room for 4 hours.
- You will be provided with prescriptions for pain medication and muscle relaxers following your surgery. It is important that you do not take these medications in dosages higher than prescribed as this could cause difficulty breathing, over sedation and even death. We encourage regular use of muscle relaxers during the first few weeks following your surgery.
- After surgery you may experience a sore throat from the breathing tube that protected your airway while you were under anesthesia. Cold liquids may help with this. You can also try warm salt water gargles.
- The muscles of the neck have been manipulated. They will be sore. Use your muscle relaxers (if prescribed) hot showers and ice packs 20 min of every hour to ease the discomfort. Place the ice packs at the back of your neck and on your incision. You may notice some swelling at the incision site. Do not apply any heat as this can increase bleeding and swelling.
- The office will see you for a follow up visit 3-4 weeks after your surgery.
- You may still have some numbness and/or pain in the arms after surgery. This is due to nerve compression or irritation prior to surgery. This should get better with time. It can take several months for complete healing.
- While you are taking narcotics please increase the fiber and fluids in your diet or use stool softeners as these medications can cause constipation. Please refer to the bowel instruction sheet that was provided.
- You have had anesthesia today. Please do not eat anything greasy, spicy, or heavy as this can cause stomach upset. Eat soft, easily digestible foods such as soup, mashed potatoes or fruit.
- Discuss with your neurosurgical provider when you can return to work. If you need a work excuse or FMLA paperwork please contact the GNS main office.

Restrictions after surgery

- Do not lift anything heavier than 5 pounds for the first 3-4 weeks after surgery.
- You can lift your arm above your head for short periods (example: washing your hair), but do not do any extended overhead work.
- You will want to limit your time in the car for the first 2 weeks to short, local trips. Do not drive while you are still taking narcotic medication or anything that makes you drowsy.
- Do not do any exercising except walking. We encourage *daily walking* as much as you are comfortable as this decreases pain, increases blood flow to your surgical site, and prevents blood clots and pneumonia. You should gradually build up your tolerance daily.
- You may shower 24 hours post-op. Continue to use the Hibiclens or a basic non-moisturizing soap to prevent infection and do not scrub the incisional site. Do not get in the bathtub, hot-tub or swimming pool until the incision is healed. Do not apply any ointments or lotions to the incision as this can break down the derma-bond glue keeping your incision closed.
- If you are having a fusion, do not take ibuprofen, Aleve, or any other anti-inflammatory medication until instructed by your surgeon.

When to call the office

- Call for any temperature >101.5 , incision swelling or separation, redness, or increased pain. We may need to see you in the office.
- If you cannot swallow food or drink, or have increased neck swelling that doesn't resolve with ice go directly to the ER.
- If you are having difficulty breathing call 911.

If you smoke, it is in your best interest to stop smoking completely. Cigarette smoking inhibits healing of nerve and bone tissues and increases the risk of complications such as wound infection. Eat a healthy diet, rich in proteins, vegetables and fruit to promote healing. Rest, relaxation and relieving stress are important components to good spine recovery.