

## PATIENT DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS FOLLOWING CERVICAL FUSION SURGERY

Patient Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*You have undergone surgery to reduce pain and/or improve the functioning of your cervical spine and/or arms. With ongoing neck care, proper body mechanics and lifestyle modifications, you will be able to resume most of the activities you enjoy. Surgery may not restore your cervical spine to a 'perfect' condition, but it can help relieve many of your symptoms. Your post-operative road to recovery will continue for approximately the next 6-12 months, while your cervical spine heals. You play a major role in how well your neck will heal by carefully following these instructions.*

- You may resume a normal diet as tolerated, unless you have dietary restrictions for another reason.
- Wear clothing that fits loosely around your waist until your bone graft incision is healed.
- Try to take a nap daily.

### **Remember Dr. Marano's 4 main rules for your recovery:**

- Stay out of the car as much as possible (no driving until collar is off; limit riding as a passenger).
- Take at least 3-4 daily walks (start with short distances, build up gradually to ¼ mi./walk, then, unless limited by other medical issues, gradually increase walks in ¼ mi. increments until you are walking 1-2 mi./day).
- Keep collar on at all times except when taking a shower (you must still keep head and neck in a neutral position when in shower).
- No smoking or nicotine products (patches, gum, snuff, etc.).

### **Remember the following in addition:**

- Avoid all repetitive arm and shoulder movement and strenuous activity; keep your spine in good alignment (hands and arms lower than shoulder level); move head, neck and shoulders as one unit.
- Do not lift items over 8# (about the weight of a gallon of milk).
- Keep eyes looking straight ahead, chin level; do not bend head back or forward.
- No flu shots or dental work (not even routine cleaning) for the next 12 months. If a dental issue must be addressed, obtain an antibiotic from your dentist before any dental work is done.
- Remain off work until discussed with Dr. Marano/James at your next office visit.

### **Dressings:**

- Keep hip incision dry and covered at all times until follow-up appt.; do not submerge in water.
- Check for any signs of infection and call James for:
  - Significant redness/swelling/incision hot to the touch
  - Drainage of pus (any) or blood (enough to saturate dressing) from incision

### **Medications:**

- Take 1 dose of pain med and/or muscle relaxer ½ hour before bed on first p.m. home.
- Take pain med when discomfort hinders your rest or activity (If you need some medication, take it! If you don't need it, don't take it just because the allotted time between doses has expired.).
- Call the office if your medications are not covering your discomfort in the dosage and schedule ordered.
- Take Decadron as directed until it is completely gone.
- Take all routine medications as discussed with Dr. Marano.
- Do not use any anti-inflammatories for the next full year (Aleve, Ibuprofen, Advil, Celebrex, etc).

### **Bowel habits:**

- Remember to get plenty of the '3 Fs'; Fruit, Fiber and Fluids
- Use Pericolace (or generic equivalent) as needed for constipation. Follow directions on bottle label.
- Dr. Marano defines constipation as exceeding the time of your normally anticipated bowel movement by 24 hours. If this should occur and you have already been using Pericolace without results, take 1 Docolax suppository. If you have no bowel movement in the next 24 hours, call the office and talk with James, so that we may alleviate any problems.

### **Call the office for:**

- Temperature over 101.5<sup>0</sup> F
- Any new numbness or tingling of your arms or legs
- Any questions about incisions or medications
- Constipation that has not been resolved by the above directions
- If your sore throat increases in severity

### **Follow-up appointment:**

You have been given a follow-up appointment within 10 days-2 weeks of surgery. Please jot down a reminder of questions you have or anything you wish to discuss at this appointment and bring the notes with you.

**\*\*\*\*\*If at any time you have difficulty breathing and/or feel your airway is compromised, call 911 immediately!**

*If you have any other urgent questions or concerns, please feel free to contact our office. We want your surgical recovery to be as pleasant as possible.*

*Our best wishes for a smooth recovery!!*

Dr. Marano and staff