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## **POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS AFTER BACK SURGERY**

### **Post-op pain**

It is not unusual to experience the following symptoms in the first few weeks after surgery:

1. Pain in and around the incision
2. Muscle tightness or spasm of the back or leg
3. Some persistent leg pain, weakness or numbness
4. Mild swelling or redness at the incision site
5. Pain on movement from bed to chair or standing position

Prescriptions for pain medicine will be given when you are discharged. Take the medication as needed and directed. You may also begin taking a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID) such as Advil, Aleve, Motrin, or Ibuprofen that may be purchased over-the-counter. Most patients require 3-4 days of narcotic pain relievers after surgery, then continue with the anti-inflammatory if not contraindicated. Read the package insert on the NSAID medication. You will also be given an antibiotic prescription at the time of discharge. Finish the antibiotics as directed.

### **Incision Care**

There are steri-strips (paper band-aids) holding the incision closed. There are no sutures to come out. They will dissolve.

1. Change the dressing daily for 5 days with 4x4 gauze and tape. After that, you may remove the dressing and let the incision air dry (leave steri-strips in place) or cover with oversized band-aid.
2. You may shower. If the dressing gets wet, change it. Do not soak the incision.
3. No ointments or solutions on the incision. Mild soap and water is okay.
4. If you develop blisters, redness or irritation from the tape, discontinue its use.

### **Post op Back Care**

The first week after surgery should be considered an extension of your hospital stay. If any activity increases discomfort, don't do it. Each day will get easier. Call the office 703 858-5454 to make an appointment with Dr. Santini in 7 days

1. Walk as much as you comfortable can. You may climb stairs. If you sit or stand for more than 20-30 minutes, you should get up and walk to avoid getting stiff.
2. Do not remain confined to bed during the day.
3. No exercise program until after your first official visit.
4. Avoid bending, twisting, or lifting more than 5 lbs.
5. You may ride in a car as a passenger. Do not ride for more than one hour without getting out and walking for a few minutes.
6. You may drive after the first post-op visit if you feel comfortable.
7. Sexual activity is permitted whenever comfort permits.
8. Decisions regarding returning to work and physical therapy needs will be made on an individual basis.

### **Call the Office**

We are there to help you. Please call at any time with any questions. Call the office if any of the following occurs:

1. Fever greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit by mouth
2. Drainage from the incision
3. Leg or back pain or swelling in excess of your pre-operative pain