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When You Get Home: Cervical

1. When to Call Your Doctor: Call the office if you have: 1. **Severe** pain that is not relieved by your pain medication. 2. Your dressing should become *saturated with blood or drainage*.

3. *Temperature above 101°*. (If you have a low grade fever 99° to 101° please deep breath several times a day as well as drink plenty of fluids). 4. Redness and swelling that extends greater than 2 inches from the incision.

2. Wound Care: Keep your incision clean and dry. You may remove your dressing to shower, you may replace it with a clean dressing after or leave open to air which ever is more comfortable for you. There will be some swelling and redness around the incision. There may be a small amount of drainage. **NO SOAKING, SWIMMING OR HEAT FOR 3 WEEKS.**

3. Pain control at Home: You will have a prescription for pain medication to use as needed; the instructions will be on the bottle. **You may use an ice pack over the incision for 20 minutes several times a day as needed for comfort.** Mild pain can be treated with Tylenol, please follow directions on the bottle, noting total use in 24 hours. Discomfort is normal while you gradually return to normal activity, but pain is a signal to stop what you are doing or proceed more slowly.

4. Follow-up: You will be seen in the office approximately 1 week after surgery. Your incision will be examined and sutures/ staples will be removed. Your 1st follow-up is usually with the Nurse Practitioner. This appointment time should be given to you upon discharge from the hospital. **If no appointment time is given, please call the office for an appointment.**

5. Activity after surgery: Typically, you will be weaker and tire more easily when you first come home from the hospital. You may not drive after surgery. Automobile travel should be limited to essential travel only for the first week. Do not lift anything greater than 10-15 pounds; do not do repetitive movements, engage in contact sports or vigorous physical activity until released to do so by the doctor. You may take short walks, gradually increase the distance as you tolerate (it is better to take several short walks then one long one). *If you have a brace*, wear it in the car and during activity unless instructed otherwise. Sexual activity can normally be resumed 1-2 weeks after surgery in a position of comfort. *Return to work* will depend on what you do at work and how you feel. Physical therapy may be recommended, this is usually about 4-6 weeks after surgery.

6. Medication: You will take medications as directed when you get home. You will be given a list at the hospital. Normally you resume your pre operative medication.

7. Diet: Start with soft easy to swallow foods and advance to regular diet when you are no longer having trouble swallowing. You will need to increase your water, fluids and fiber. Pain medications and less than normal activity tend to cause constipation. You may take a mild laxative if needed.