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POSTOP CARE AFTER - ANTERIOR LUMBAR FUSION SURGERY

WOUND

- You can shower but keep the wound dry (i.e. not soaking); do not swim or take a bath for 3 months after surgery
- Do not put any creams on the wound
- For the first week after surgery, after every shower, pat the wound dry

EXERCISES

- The best exercise is walking. Small amounts frequently are best
- Do not overdo it! Walk only
- Follow the guidelines given to you by the physical therapist in hospital

POSTURE

- Try and keep the back straight
- Don't bend, lift or twist
- Avoid sitting for over an hour without taking a break
- Keep mobile- change positions frequently
- Keep the brace on every time you get out of bed for 3 months

DRIVING

- Do not drive for at least 6 weeks after surgery
- If you must be a passenger in the car, recline the seat and travel short distances only for the first month
- When driving take a 15 minute break for every 45 minutes of driving

RETURN TO WORK

- You can return to a desk job 4 weeks after surgery.
- Don't sit for prolonged periods of time.
- See your neurosurgeon before returning to a physical occupation

PAIN RELIEF

- Tylenol (#1, 2 or 3), Percocet or Vicodin can be taken for wound pain after surgery
- Robaxin or Flexeril is used for muscle spasm
- Numbness is very slow to recover and there may always be some residual numbness
- Pins and needles are not uncommon after surgery but should settle over time
- Do not take any anti-inflammatories (e.g. Voltaren, Mobic etc.) for 3 months after surgery or the fusion will fail

FOLLOW-UP

- You need to see your neurosurgeon or his PA 2 weeks after surgery
- You will need some normal X-rays of your neck at 6 weeks (AP/lat L-spine) and some bending ones at 3 months.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- If the wound becomes excessively red, swollen or painful or develops a discharge, or you have questions, contact your neurosurgeon at his office or see your GP.
- If it is an emergency and you cannot contact anyone come to the Emergency Room
- DO NOT SMOKE OR THE FUSION WILL FAIL