

Provider: Conor Regan, MD

Anterior Cervical Discectomy and Fusion (ACDF) Post-Op Instructions

Your dressing is Dermabond (skin glue) unless you have an allergy to it which we will discuss preoperatively. Dermabond does not require any special care and will start to peel off by itself in about 1 to 2 weeks. It does tend to turn purple as it begins to dissolve.

You may take a shower whenever you wish. You may let the water run over the incision but do not soak it in a pool or lake until at least 3 to 4 weeks after surgery.

You may move your neck however you like. You may notice that it is more uncomfortable in the morning when you first wake up and in the evening after a long day. You will not ruin the surgery by moving your neck. You do not need any restrictions on activity.

You may sleep in whatever position you like after the surgery. Some patients have found that sleeping in a recliner makes it easier to get out of bed in the morning, but you can sleep on a regular bed if you want.

You may drive when you are off pain medications after surgery. Make sure to practice in a parking lot as your neck is stiffer than you are used to.

Most patients find that their throat is very sore for about a week and that some foods feel like they get stuck during swallowing. This is normal and will usually improve over 2 to 3 weeks. Liquids, soup, and soft foods are easier to handle for the first week or two.

You will have a lot of soreness in the back of your neck and between your shoulder blades. This is normal and occurs because the muscles in the back of the neck spasm after surgery. It will improve over 2 to 3 weeks and the pain medication will be less and less needed.

Please do not take nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications for the first 6 to 8 weeks. These include medications like ibuprofen, Motrin, Aleve, naproxen, diclofenac, meloxicam, and Celebrex. Studies have shown that the fusion is harmed by taking these medications early in the postoperative period.

Decrease your pain medications as fast as possible after surgery to avoid their side effects. You may cut the pills in half to decrease the dose if needed and start to space out the doses longer and longer. Make sure that you are taking a laxative after surgery as the pain medications are very constipating. If you have not been given a prescription, make sure to pick up an over-the-counter laxative when you get your postoperative prescriptions. Dulcolax, MiraLAX, and sennosides are the most popular and work well.