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POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

THYROID/NECK SURGERY

As you prepare for discharge after surgery, the following information will help you to return to your best level of health. **These instructions will override any provided to you from the hospital.**

What should you expect and do after surgery?

- You will stay overnight at the hospital.
- You may experience difficulty swallowing. **DIETARY RESTRICTIONS:** liquid diet (including soup) for the first 48 hours following surgery. Gradually progress to a soft food diet (yogurt, cottage cheese, mashed potatoes, pudding, applesauce, oatmeal) for 48-72 hours. After this diet is tolerated progress to solid foods, approximately five days following surgery.
- Start taking a **stool softener such as Colace (over the counter)** immediately following surgery: **100mg twice daily until no longer taking pain medication.** You may also use in conjunction with the stool softener Miralax: 1 cap full twice a day. If you do not have a bowel movement within 48 hours then you use Milk of Magnesia as directed.
- You will have pain following your surgical procedure. Take the **pain medication regularly as directed by the physician, but DO NOT take more than directed.** This is intended for comfort to alleviate the pain, but will not relieve all the pain. **Do not take the pain medication without eating 20-30 minutes prior. DO NOT DRINK ALCOHOL WHILE TAKING THE PAIN MEDICATION.**
- Cold packs** can be used to help reduce swelling and pain from the surgical incision. Place ice packs over the surgical site 30 minutes to 1 hour on and 30 minutes to 1 hour off for the first 24-48 hours. **Do not place ice packs directly on skin. Always cover ice packs with a cloth or outside of your clothing.**
- You may shower/bathe after 24 hours of surgery. Take care in being gentle when cleaning over any surgical areas. Towel dry completely and place bandages if necessary to surgical sites.
- Change the bandage after the first 24-48 hours. Wash hands before touching your incision(s). Clean the incision with soap and water. Do not apply antibiotic creams to the incision.

Apply clean dressing if needed for comfort. **If steri-strips (strips of tape used to close the incision and help it to heal) were used on your incision, do not pull them off.** They should fall off on their own.

- ☒ Return to limited activity (no running, pushing, pulling, lifting or straining) after the first 24 hours. The earlier you are up walking and moving the better you will feel, and quicker you will recover.
- ☒ Resume all home medications, unless otherwise directed by the physician.

What should you NOT do after surgery?

- ☒ You have had general anesthesia, so it may take a day or more to fully recover. For the first 24-48 hours following surgery: **do not drive, do not operate heavy machinery.**
- ☒ **DRIVING IS PROHIBITED WHILE TAKING PAIN MEDICATION!**
- ☒ **NO LIFTING** over 10-15 pounds, or perform any strenuous activity for at least 2 weeks.

If you experience the following symptoms:

- ☒ **DIFFICULTY SWALLOWING:** This symptom is normal. Follow the dietary restrictions provided. If the problem persists, becomes severe, or is accompanied by other symptoms (fever, chills, vomiting) contact the office for instructions.
- ☒ **SHOULDER, NECK OR BACK PAIN:** This is normal. For relief, try hot showers, walking, placing a heating pad around the area, and taking the pain medication as directed.
- ☒ **BLEEDING:** You will have some bleeding for the first 24-48 hours. On some occasions you can see the blood through the bandages. If you have blood running out from under the bandage, apply pressure to the outside of the bandage for at least 5 minutes. Change the dressing if it continues to bleed. Continue to apply pressure. Call the office if the bleeding does not slow or stop after 30 minutes.
- ☒ **BRUISING OR SWELLING:** This is normal. Anytime you have trauma to the body the natural response is bruising and swelling. You may apply ice to the surgical area for 30 minutes to 1 hour on and 30 minutes to 1 hour off for 24-48 hours. **DO NOT APPLY ICE TO BARE SKIN. WRAP ICE/ICE PACK IN CLOTH OR PLACE OUTSIDE OF CLOTHING.**
- ☒ **NAUSEA AND/OR VOMITING:** Often, pain medication is the cause for nausea/vomiting. It is very important to eat something before taking the pain medication. This will help to minimize or eliminate this problem. Another common cause is anesthesia. This will normally last only 24 hours. Try a clear liquid diet for the first 24 hours, and limit the pain medication until this problem is resolved. If this problem persists for more than 24 hours, please notify our office for further instruction.
- ☒ **REDNESS AROUND THE INCISION:** Your incision may have some redness and swelling following surgery. Notify our office if continued swelling or redness occurs. **Notify our office if you have red streaks from your incision.**

- ☒ **DRAINAGE AROUND THE INCISION:** You may have some clear drainage or sometimes light bloody color drainage, which is normal. If the drainage is thick, has color or odor to it, you need to notify our office. In order to prevent this, clean the incision daily with soap and water, and apply clean dressing.
- ☒ **CONSTIPATION:** Most often, this is a direct result of the pain medication. As a precaution, you should start taking a stool softener immediately following surgery. **COLACE** (over the counter): 100 mg twice daily. Drink at least 8 glasses of nonalcoholic clear fluids daily. You may also use in conjunction with the stool softener Miralax: 1 cap full twice a day. If you do not have a bowel movement within 48 hours then you use Milk of Magnesia as directed. Walking can help relieve constipation.
- ☒ **TEMPERATURE OF 101.0 OR HIGHER:** try Tylenol, Motrin or Ibuprofen. You may alternate Tylenol and Motrin every 4 hours. If your temperature does not come down after 8 hours, call the office for assistance.