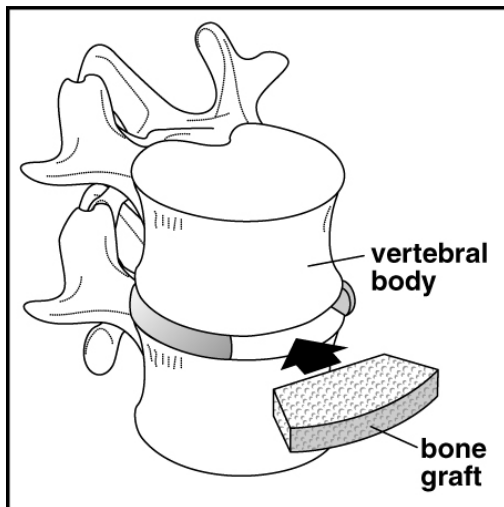


Anterior Cervical Discectomy and Fusion (ACDF)

This handout will review anterior cervical discectomy and fusion (ACDF), planning and getting ready for surgery.

ACDF is a front-neck surgery that is used to remove either a disc material or overgrown bone that is putting pressure on a spinal nerve or the spinal cord. This pressure can cause arm pain, numbness, tingling, and weakness.



The surgery removes the disc between the vertebral bodies above and below it. Then, a bone graft is put into that space in place of the disc. Over the graft, a plate is placed and secured with screws.

Getting Ready for Surgery

Refer to your booklet "Having Surgery at UW Hospital" for more instructions.

Going Home

You will leave the hospital the same day or the next morning. It can be helpful to have a friend or family member to spend the first 24-48 hours with you at home.

Cervical (Neck) Brace

You may need to wear a brace. Follow the instructions you receive at discharge for wearing the brace.

Pain

You will have a sore throat or hoarse voice that will go away over time. Eating a soft diet for the first two days may help.

To help decrease pain in your neck/shoulder blades:

- Change positions often.
- Use heat or ice. If you use ice, cover the ice pack with a cloth and apply for 20 minutes per hour.
- Take pain medicines as prescribed.

As your pain improves, you will need less medicine. Take all pain pills with food and at least 8 ounces of water. **Do not** take any non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicines, such as ibuprofen or naproxen until your surgeon says it is okay. These will slow healing. Never start a new drug, without talking with your doctor or pharmacist first.

Activity

- **Do not** lift more than 10 pounds until approved by your doctor.
- **No** pushing or pulling motions.
- **No** lifting items above the head.
- You can resume sex after 2 weeks.
- **No** driving until you are no longer taking narcotic pain pills or wearing a neck brace. Limit driving to short trips and slowly increase your driving time.

Work

Talk with your doctor about when you may return to work. You may need to be off work for 2-6 weeks. This depends on the type of work you do. Heavy lifting may not be allowed for 12 weeks.

Preventing Constipation

Take the stool softener twice a day while you are taking narcotic pain pills. If you do not have a bowel movement within two days, take Milk of Magnesia® (6 teaspoons, 2-3 times a day) until you have a bowel movement. You may eat prunes or drink prune juice instead of taking Milk of Magnesia®. Drink many 8-ounce glasses of water or juice daily so that your body has enough fluids.

Wound Care

- Keep dressing clean and dry after discharge. Remove the dressing after 5 days. You may keep the dressing off after 5 days if there is no drainage.
- Follow the instructions in your discharge packet for incision care.
- **No** tub baths until approved by your doctor.
- Look at your incision daily after day 5 for signs of infections.
- After the incision heals, use sunscreen for the next year to keep it from turning dark.

When to Call

- Increased redness, swelling, or drainage
- Fever greater than 100°F for two readings, 4 hours apart.
- Severe or increasing pain
- New weakness

Who to Call

Neurosurgery Clinic,
Monday- Friday, 8 am — 5 pm
(608) 263-7502

After hours, this number will be sent to the paging operator. Ask for the doctor on call for your clinic.

The toll-free number is **1-800-323-8942**.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 6/2024 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#4454