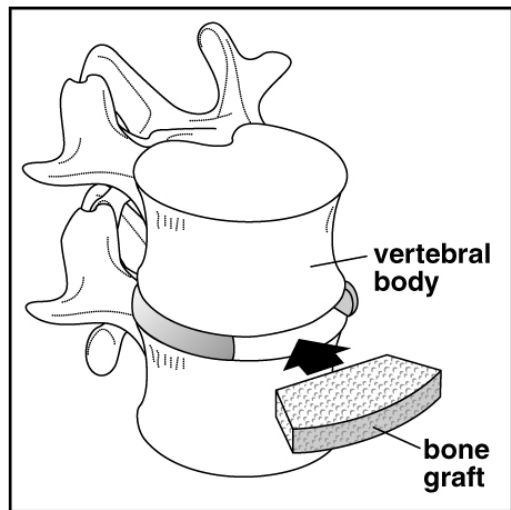


Anterior Cervical Discectomy and Fusion (ACDF)

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

What is an ACDF?

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, something 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.

Constipation

Start taking a stool softener (docusate with senna) two days **before** surgery. Take it with at least 8 ounces of water. This will prevent constipation caused by pain medicine. Do **not** take any fiber or stool softener on the morning of surgery

Going Home

You will leave the hospital the same day or the next morning. You will need a friend or family member to spend the first 24-48 hours with you when you return home.

Cervical (Neck) Brace

You may need to wear a brace. If your doctor orders a brace, you will wear your brace even when taking a shower. Do not drive until you no longer wear the collar.

Pain

You will have a sore or hoarse throat that will go away over time.

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 and Naprosyn, for **6 weeks**. 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.
- 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

- Remove the dressing after 3 days.
- Follow the instructions in your discharge packet for incision care.
- No tub baths until approved by your doctor.
- Look at your incision daily 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**.

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

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 © 2/2020 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#4454