



(470) 293-9800
Southernneurosurgery.com

Postoperative Guidelines for a Spinal Cord Stimulator

Incision care

- You will have two incisions. One incision will be on your back, and the other incision will be on your hip for placement of the battery.
- Your incisions are closed with sutures (also called “stitches”) on the inside of your skin. These are absorbed over time by your body. The outside of your skin is closed with a skin glue. The skin glue will eventually come off in its own time.
- Sometimes patients may need sutures on the outside of their skin. If you have sutures on the outside, these will be removed at your follow up appointment (10-14 days after surgery)
- You may take a shower the day after your surgery. Do not scrub your wound, but gently cleanse it and pat dry.
- If you have outside stitches, wait 3 days before showering.
- Do not submerge into water or a tub for 6 weeks.
- Leave the wound open to dry. Do not apply ointments or creams to the incision.
- It is normal to have a small amount of brown to reddish colored ooze for a few days.
- Ice the incision twice a day for 20 minutes at a time for the first week. This will help with pain and swelling.

Pain Expectations

- It is normal to expect pain after back surgery. That is why we prescribe medication to ease you through the healing process.
- After surgery, common pain areas are in the middle back and around the incisions.
- This pain will get better with time as your body heals, so it is important to be patient as your body is healing.
- It is normal to have a sore throat after endotracheal intubation, and this will improve over the week after surgery.

Medications

- You will be given prescriptions for a pain medication.
- Do not take pain medication on an empty stomach. This may make you feel nauseated.
- Do not drink alcohol if you are taking pain medication.

- If you feel that your pain is well tolerated, you may begin to wean yourself off of your pain medication sooner than your post-op visit.
- Because pain medication can cause constipation, it is important to have stool softeners and laxatives at home such as Colace or Senna to prevent constipation.
- Take the stool softener daily and use the laxative as needed
- If you still have constipation after using these medicines, you may use an over-the-counter suppository or enema.

Medications to avoid

- NO blood thinners such as Aspirin, Coumadin, Warfarin, Xarelto, Plavix, etc. for 5-7 days after your surgery. We will tell you when you may resume your blood thinners.

Therapy

- When you are at home, walk between 30-60 minutes a day, but not all at the same time. Divide your walks into smaller intervals of 10-15 minutes at a time.
- It is important to walk for your overall recovery for a number of reasons. Getting out of bed is good for your lungs, it prevents blood clots from forming in your legs, and speeds your recovery.
- Do not sit for more than 30 minutes at a time. Move around to prevent your muscles from tightening and becoming stiff, which can lead to more discomfort.
- Use your common sense, if your body says that it is tired, listen to it.

Restrictions

- Activities such as bending at the waist, lifting >10 lbs, and twisting are restricted during your recovery period, which is about 6 weeks.
- This means NO household chores such as vacuuming and laundry, hobbies such as golfing, and yard work.
- If you have young children or grandchildren, do NOT pick them up. Allow someone else to help you at home.
- You may drive as long as you are not taking narcotic pain medication.
- It is ok to ride as a passenger if you are taking narcotic pain medication.
- If you are unable to work due to these restrictions, please let us know if we need to complete any paperwork for your employer.

Diet

- It is important to remember to eat and drink fluids so that your body may properly heal.
- If you are experiencing nausea, follow a “BRAT diet” which is Bananas, Rice, Applesauce, Toast and advance as tolerated

Smoking

- Smoking constricts your blood vessels which carry oxygen and nutrients to your healing bone and muscles. This may impair healing.
- Carefully consider quitting smoking during this time. If you would like help in smoking cessation, please let us know.

Sexual Activity

- Back and neck pain can interfere with your sex life, but we want you to resume normal relations with your partner as soon as possible after surgery. We recommend avoiding sex for 6 weeks after surgery. Once you have begun the healing process, use the position that is most comfortable. You may find that lying on your back is the most comfortable if you can support your partner's weight or your partner can support him/her self with arms and knees. Side lying may also be comfortable since neither partner is bearing the burden of the weight. Decide if a small pillow at the waist is helpful in supporting the spine and you will probably want a pillow located under your neck and head. Be careful not to twist the lower back. Be sure you communicate your fears and concerns with your partner before you resume sexual relations.

Call our office if you have any of these symptoms:

- Fever > 101 degrees
- Constipation that is not relieved by stool medications
- Redness, warmth, or significant drainage from your incision
- Shortness of breath or Chest Pain
- Pain, swelling, or redness in your calves
- Unexplained incontinence or accidents involving your bladder or bowel, or if you are unable to urinate
- Worsening back or leg pain than before surgery

Follow up appointment

- We have scheduled a follow up appointment for you that is two weeks after your surgery.
- A representative from the company for your stimulator will also see you at this appointment and work with you to adjust the settings of the stimulator to your liking.
- You will be provided with a card listing the date and time
- If you need this appointment changed, please call our office

If you are experiencing any problems or have any questions, please call Morgan at ext. 204