



Discharge information following your back and neck operation

How long will I have to take pain killers for?

You may still have pain for some time after your operation. This will gradually disappear as bruising around the operation site resolves and the affected nerves recover. Residual pain tends to be worse when you are tired or under the weather. Soreness around your wound will also resolve as healing occurs.

On discharge you will be given 7 days worth of pain killers – you will need to visit your GP to obtain more as required. In the first few days at home continue to take pain killers very regularly. Then gradually reduce them or change to a weaker type as you feel is appropriate. It is important that your pain is controlled so that you can move freely and do not become stiff.

How can I care for my wound?

Best advice is to leave it alone. Ideally the wound should be left uncovered, but if your clothes rub it, a light dressing may be more comfortable until the stitches are removed. If any redness, swelling, increased tenderness or oozing is noted, contact your GP for advice. Ward staff will tell you what to do about removal of stitches/ clips.

Are there any specific points about bathing dressing etc?

A shower is preferable to a bath. Do not worry about getting your wound wet as this will cause no harm (providing any wet dressings are removed). If you do have a bath, take care when getting in and out; use a non-slip mat if possible.

When dressing, try to avoid bending and twisting. Loose clothing is generally more comfortable in the first few days at home.

What exercise should I be taking?

If necessary, the physiotherapist will have seen you and provided an information pack about specific exercises. It is important that you follow his/her advice when you go home. Walking is an excellent form of exercise after back and neck surgery. Swimming is good after lower back surgery, once your wound is healed - usually after a couple of weeks. Avoid other sports for six to twelve weeks, and check with your GP as to when it would be possible to take up rigorous sports again.

Gradually increase the amount that you do until leading a normal life again. There are no restrictions following surgery within the constraints of pain – If it hurts **stop!** Keep within your ideal weight range – extra pounds put a strain on your back.

Sexual relationships can resume as soon as you feel fit to do so.

What about lifting?

You should not lift heavy objects (that includes children) for 3 months.

After this time always respect your back when lifting anything: bend your knees and avoid twisting your back, have someone to help you etc.

Information for Patients

How much rest should I have?

You are the best judge of what you can and cannot do; short bursts of activity followed by a rest period are advised. Do not let yourself become exhausted by doing too much too soon. Try doing more each day and see how you get on.

When sitting, choose a chair which offers support for your spine and keeps your back straight. Do not slump in a chair.

When can I drive my car?

You will need to avoid driving for a time – seek further advice from either the ward staff or your GP. Emergency stops or other sudden movements may jolt your back – make sure you are using a properly fitted head restraint. Be guided by how you feel and gradually build up the length of time you spend in a car.

When can I go back to work?

This depends on the work you do and how fit you feel, so discuss this with your doctor. You could consider going back to work on a part-time basis first, if this is possible and more suitable for you.

If you need a sick note to cover your stay in hospital, ask a member of staff before leaving the ward. Thereafter, sick notes can be obtained from your GP, to claim sickness pay from your employer or benefits from social security.

These are only guidelines; should you have any problems at home, contact your GP for advice.

**Neurosciences Department
Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham**

Mindelsohn Way
Edgbaston
Birmingham, B15 2GW
Tel: 0121 371 5650

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email patientexperience@uhb.nhs.uk.