

Patient information factsheet

Cervical laminectomy

This operation is performed at the back of your neck and involves removing the arches of bone at the back of your spine to make more room for your spinal cord.



Posture

- It is important to maintain a good posture following this operation, especially when sitting. A poor posture prevents the muscles supporting your neck from working effectively and can cause pain.
- Think about your posture regularly and correct yourself if you find yourself slouching. Keeping your lower back supported helps keep your neck in a better position.
- Avoid sitting or staying in one position for long periods of time (apart from sleeping). Get up and move around at least every half hour.
- When sleeping try and keep your neck in a neutral position that is comfortable for you.
- If you are still experiencing pain in your shoulder, arms or hands try resting your arms on a pillow when you are sitting.
- If you have difficulty with balance, your physiotherapist can give you further advice.



Going back to work and hobbies

- Discuss your return to work and hobbies with your doctor and physiotherapist.
- Remember to maintain good posture.
- Avoid lifting heavy objects and excessive pushing or pulling for 12 weeks.
- If you have to think twice about lifting something, it's probably too heavy.
- Don't work with your arms above your head or do activities that involve keeping your neck backwards.
- You must inform your driving insurance of your operation. You are ready to return to driving when your neck has adequate range of movement, you are confident to do an emergency stop without hesitating and providing you have not been advised to wear a hard collar.

Exercises

Research has shown that general exercise can improve the short term and long term outcome of your operation and reduce the need for further medical intervention.

Specific benefits of exercise aim to:

- restore movement to your spine to decrease the potential effects of scar tissue
- restore muscle strength and posture
- improve circulation and reduce inflammation
- reduce pain
- improve fitness and endurance
- increase confidence
- restore functional mobility more quickly

When to start exercises

- You will be encouraged to mobilise the day after surgery.
- Your physiotherapist will advise you on gentle neck exercises.
- Start as soon as you feel comfortable.
- You should move in a controlled way, within a comfortable range.
- It is normal to feel the stretch but the exercises should not increase pain, symptoms of pins and needles or weakness.
- Avoid excessive neck movement or excessive stretching.
- Your physiotherapist will check your mobility prior to discharge home.

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audio tape, please telephone 023 8120 4688 for help.