After cervical (neck) spinal surgery

We've given you this factsheet because you have recently had cervical (neck) spinal surgery at Wessex Spinal Unit. It contains useful information and advice that you will need to follow when you return home.

Your consultant is:........................................................................................................................

Wound care
Keep your wound clean and dry. You do not need to have a dressing over it unless you are told otherwise by your hospital staff.

You can have a bath or shower, but you will need to keep your wound dry until your sutures or clips are removed.

You may also experience some numbness and tingling around the wound. This is normal and may last a few months.

Check your wound daily for:
• any leakage from the wound or increased heat
• increased redness or swelling
• any increasing pain around the wound site

If you experience any of these symptoms or if you have a high temperature, please contact: Wessex Spinal Unit: 023 8120 6508 or 023 8120 4641 (at any time)

Clips and sutures
Clips or sutures are usually removed at your GP’s surgery seven to ten days after surgery. We will give you a letter about this and explain which day you need to make the appointment for.

If you have subcuticular (buried) sutures these will dissolve over time. You may also have Steristrips over your wound. These will peel away with time, but can be removed after five to seven days after the operation.

Medication
When you leave hospital, we will give you a supply of medication to take with you. You will need to arrange any repeat prescriptions through your GP.

Please continue to take your pain relief once you are home as you may continue to experience pain for a while after the operation.

There is sometimes a wait for medicines to arrive from the hospital pharmacy and we may ask you to wait in our discharge lounge rather than on the ward. We will try to ensure this delay is
as short as possible for you.

**Alcohol**
Check the labels on your medicines for advice on whether you should avoid alcohol.

**Driving**
Do not drive for the first two to six weeks after surgery, and not until you can sit comfortably. You will need to feel confident that you can perform an emergency stop. If you have significant numbness or weakness in your arms or legs, you must notify the DVLA of your surgery. You must not drive until given permission to do so by the DVLA.

**Work**
The timing of your return to work depends mainly on how you feel and what you do for a living. It is not unusual to be off work for six to eight weeks. Ask your medical team for advice if you are unsure.

**Follow-up appointments**
We will send you a letter in the post about your follow-up appointment in the outpatient department. Please ensure you attend this appointment to see your consultant, the physiotherapy team or the nurse specialist.

**Symptoms to look out for**
Contact your ward on the telephone number at the end of the factsheet if you experience:
- worsening arm or leg pain
- any new or worsening weakness in your arms or legs
- any new pins and needles or numbness in your arms or legs
- incontinence (bladder or bowel)
- a fever or a high temperature
- redness, swelling or discharge from the wound
- increasing neck pain
- difficulty swallowing
- problems with breathing

**Anti-embolism stockings**
When you leave hospital, you will continue to wear your white anti-embolism stockings both day and night for at least two weeks and until you have returned to the level of mobility that is usual for you. You should check your skin daily. The stockings should not be removed for longer than 30 minutes.

It is important that the stockings are removed and reapplied correctly on a daily basis. If you are unable to do this it may be safer not to go home with stockings.

**Leaving hospital**
During your stay the nursing staff and other healthcare professionals will start to plan your discharge (when you leave hospital) with you. Your surgical team will decide when it is safe for you to leave hospital. A member of the therapy team may also assess you. Our multidisciplinary team may need to discuss any specific arrangements you need.

On the day of your discharge you will need to arrange for someone to collect you from the ward at the time advised by your nurse. Someone must be at home with you when you are discharged from hospital for at least one week.
Contact us
Southampton General Hospital main switchboard: **023 8077 7222**

F4 spinal ward: **023 8120 6508**

Email: SpinalANP@uhs.nhs.uk

DVLA medical enquiries helpline: **0870 600 0301**
DVLA website: [www.dvla.gov.uk](http://www.dvla.gov.uk)

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.