

## **Post-operative Spine Instructions**

Call our office for any questions during office hours (510-428-3238) and ask for the scoliosis nurse.

### ❖ Pain Medicine

- You were sent home with a prescription pain medicine. Take this as directed. As you get better, you will be able to go longer between doses, and eventually be able to use plain Tylenol (or a store-brand non-aspirin pain reliever) instead. Since the prescription pain medicine has a full dose of Tylenol in it (acetaminophen), you may take one or the other, but NOT both. You may alternate them, however, or use the prescription only at times when the pain is worse.
- If you need a refill of prescription pain medicine, or a prescription for Tylenol, call your pharmacy and they will contact us for the authorization. Do not wait until you are out of medicine!! It can take up to 2 days for us to call in refill authorizations, and we ONLY do them on weekdays from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. Please plan appropriately for refills before weekends.
- Your doctor may not want you to use Advil, Motrin, Aleve, Aspirin, ibuprofen, or naproxen for 1 to 12 months after surgery. These products decrease inflammation and can slow bone healing. This decision depends on your individual case and your orthopaedic surgeon.

### ❖ Brace (IF your doctor prescribes a brace)

- You must wear the brace at all times (24 hours a day) until Dr Policy clears you to remove it. This is generally 4 months after surgery, if healing is going well. When you are cleared to shower, you may remove the brace for showering only. The brace is designed to support your surgery area to maximize your chances of excellent bone fusion. Even small amounts of movement can slow or prevent bone fusion, the rods hold the spine quite still, but the brace “reminds” your body to stay straight and not put pressure on the rods.

### ❖ Vitamin and iron supplements

- Take a “one a day” vitamin with iron for 2 months after surgery. You should choose a child’s strength (like Flintstones) if you weigh under 100 pounds, and an adult strength (like Centrum) if over 100 pounds. A plain multivitamin may be taken daily after two months if desired (the iron is no longer needed). Iron and B Vitamins help replace blood and heal soft tissues.
- Consult with your pediatrician for questions regarding children who take other medications.

### ❖ Calcium supplement

- Take an extra 1000 mg of Calcium a day for one year after surgery. Calcium is necessary for the body to heal and fuse the spine. You may choose any type you like and will continue to take.
- Calcium fortified Orange Juice has 350 mg per cup, and the chocolate or caramel flavored chews (Viactiv) have 500 mg per chew. You may also take Tums or other Calcium antacid, check the label to see how much is in each tablet. You can only absorb 500 mg at a time, so spread it out into two doses or more each day.
- You are trying to get about 1500 mg of Calcium total a day, some will come in your food. Milk has lots of calcium, but you would have to drink 5-6 cups a day, every single day, to get enough.
- Consult with your pediatrician or nutritionist for children who are fed other than a regular diet.

### ❖ Things to avoid...

- Ibuprofen, naprosen, aspirin, prednisone – You doctor may not want you to take Motrin, Advil, ibuprofen, Aleve, Naprosen, naproxen sodium, Aspirin or any anti-inflammatory medicine for one year after surgery. Your body depends on the inflammatory response after surgery to fuse the spine bones together. We don’t want to

slow or stop this process as it may make another surgery necessary. You may use acetaminophen for pain or fever. Inhaled Steroids for asthma are safe.

#### ❖ Dressings

- You may remove the dressings over all incisions 7 days after surgery. If there is no drainage, you should leave the steri-strip tapes in place and open to air. If there is some moisture draining from the incision, cover just that area with gauze until the drainage stops. Change the dressing at least once a day to keep dry.
- After all drainage has stopped, or if the incision is dry when the dressings are removed, you may shower once a day. No stooping, twisting or bending is allowed, if something is dropped, you must have help to pick it up.
- “The little clear string at the ends of the incision...”, this is the absorbable suture that was used to close the incision. The part under the skin will absorb over time, but you can trim off the outside piece when the dressing is removed to keep it from tickling or getting irritated. It will eventually fall off if you do not cut it. Some people are more sensitive to this material, and develop a red, sore area at the ends, or in the middle of the incision where the knot is. Call the nurse or let us know at your next appointment if this becomes a problem.

#### ❖ Going Out

- You may begin walking slowly when you get home, and build up to short walks outside. As your endurance is better and your pain decreases, you may go out for short trips in the community. IF ordered, use your brace at all times, and don't do too much too fast. Remember to take rest periods.
- During the school year you will start home instruction about a week after coming home from the hospital. Plan your day around the time the teacher is coming, as you need to be awake and alert during this time. This will continue for about 4 weeks.
- You will be ready to stay up all day by about 6 weeks after surgery. At this time you may return to school. Some start back with half days for a week or two, then transition to full days.
- During a follow-up visit, take home a note for return to school if it is needed. If you need to call for a school note, plan on a 1-2 week turn-a-round time for it to come to you. We cannot release any information directly to schools. We must draft a letter and send it to your home, and you can take it to the school.
- During your follow-up visits with your orthopaedic surgeon, you will get a sheet on activities. This will outline when you can begin participating in different sports after surgery.