

Cervical Fusion Activity Guidelines

4 weeks – 3 months after surgery

Cervical fusion precautions:

- Must wear collar if instructed- no neck flexion, extension, rotation, or bending if in collar
- No overhead activities (brushing/washing hair is ok, but nothing more than that)
- No lifting/pushing/pulling more than 15lbs
- No neck range of motion exercises
- No NSAIDs

Activities and exercises: Collar must be worn for exercise if you're still in one

- Continue walking, may now use a treadmill at a comfortable walking pace
 - If already doing a walking regimen, increase gradually with a goal of 50-100% more at 3 months
 - If not doing a walking regimen, begin one with a 10-15-minute walk and increase to 30 minutes by 3 months
- Water walking if incision is healed and approved by our office (no swimming for exercise yet)
- Recumbent stationary bike
- Stair stepper / stair mill
- Light arm strengthening
 - Biceps, triceps (lying in bed), wrist flexion/extension, deltoids
 - No overhead lifting, no benches/chest presses, no arching/twisting back
 - Lifting limit of 15lbs still applies

Tips and advice:

All of the above activities must be done with cervical spine precautions in mind

- Add new activities gradually, no more than 1 per week
- If it hurts, stop this activity and wait a few weeks before trying it again
- Shorter, more frequent periods of activity and exercise are better tolerated than one long period

Please send a MyChart message or call with any questions: 410-539-3434

Cervical Fusion Activity Guidelines

3-6 months after surgery

Cervical fusion precautions:

- Limit excessive overhead activities
- No lifting/pushing/pulling more than 20lbs
- Ok to perform gentle neck range of motion. No neck strengthening exercises.
- Limit NSAIDs

Activities and exercises:

- All previous exercises
- Elliptical
- Upright stationary bike
- Snorkeling, backstroke or breast stroke swimming (no neck rotation)
- Treadmill on incline, brisk walk/light jogging
- Easy hiking (no heavy backpacks)
- Upper extremity strength training with light resistance bands (maintain precautions) or max 20lb weights
- Lower extremity strengthening on machines
- Cross country skiing

Tips and advice:

All of the above activities must be done with cervical spine precautions in mind

- Add new activities gradually, no more than 1 per week
- If it hurts, stop this activity and wait a few weeks before trying it again
- Shorter, more frequent periods of activity and exercise are better tolerated than one long period

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Cervical Fusion Activity Guidelines

6 – 12 months after surgery

Cervical fusion precautions:

- Limit excessive overhead activities
- No lifting/pushing/pulling more than 25-30lbs
- Ok to perform gentle neck range of motion. No neck strengthening exercises.
- Limit NSAIDs

Activities and exercises:

- All previous exercises
- Use of weight machines for upper extremities up to 30lbs, limit overhead or spine stressing
- Moderate hiking, no heavy backpacks
- Free throws, light tennis, kicking soccer ball, playing catch
- Running
- Modified yoga/Pilates
- Fishing
- Hunting (firearms with minimal kick and crossbows)

Tips and advice:

All of the above activities must be done with cervical spine precautions in mind

- Add new activities gradually, no more than 1 per week
- If it hurts, stop this activity and wait a few weeks before trying it again
- Shorter, more frequent periods of activity and exercise are better tolerated than one long period

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Cervical Fusion Activity Guidelines

1 year or more after surgery

Lifelong recommendations:

Be nice to your neck! The more forces you put on it, the more likely you are to wear out adjacent levels

- Be careful with extreme bending or twisting of the neck
- Good body mechanics: squat down, lift with your legs, carry things close to your body, etc.
- Normal household lifting is ok, but avoid heavy lifting (50lbs+)
- Good ergonomics, don't look down to read, text, work- have those things up in front of your eyes
- NSAIDs are okay now

Activities and exercises:

- No set restrictions, but use common sense and increase gradually
- Skiing
- Swimming
- Golf
- Cycling
- Contact sports
- Hunting
- Yard work
- All household chores

Tips and advice:

- Add new activities gradually, no more than 1 per week
- If it hurts, stop this activity and wait a few weeks before trying it again

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