

Cervical Surgery

What can I do for activity?

Your body will still need some time to heal after you go home from your surgery. Follow these guidelines about activity and exercise to make sure you are helping your body recover. If pain, numbness, or weakness return, you may be doing too much. Rest and the pain should go away.

Daily activity:

- Do not lift or carry more than 5-8 lbs. (the same as a gallon of milk). Use 2 hands to lift whenever possible.
- Keep your arms close to your body when you reach, lift or carry any item. Do not reach far and do not reach often, especially overhead.
- Do not push or pull often, especially any aggressive motion. This may be sweeping, vacuuming or walking a dog using your affected arm. Only use short, small strokes that are close to your body when you begin to sweep, vacuum, or walk a dog again in the future.
- If you drove a car often before surgery, you can drive again after you meet all of these:
 - It has been at least 1 week since your surgery
 - You are not taking any narcotics or medicines that cloud your thinking
 - You feel like you can safely control your foot and leg

Body posture:

- Keep your head, shoulders and hips in a straight line. Do not lean your head or bend your neck for long periods of time. This may mean you cannot use a computer, or read from and use a cellphone. Be careful of your head and neck position when standing at a counter or sink.
- Don't wait until it hurts to move. Change positions often. Don't sit for long periods of time, such as on long car rides or using a laptop or computer.
- If you find sleeping uncomfortable, try using a contoured pillow or rolled up bath towel (secured with rubber bands at each end) under your neck. This will support your spine when you are lying down. Otherwise use only one pillow.

Exercise:

- Light exercise, such as walking short distances, helps healing. Stop if you experience unusual pain or discomfort. Do not use arm weights or exercise bands.

When will I be able to return to work?

You and your surgeon will talk at your follow up appointment to plan your date for returning to work. If possible start work again slowly. You can do this by working fewer hours at a time or for fewer days. Take short stretch breaks at work and change positions as often as you can. Try placing ice packs on your back during your scheduled breaks or 2-3 times per day as needed.

In general you may return to work when you reach these goals:

Neurosurgery Return to Work Guidelines - After Cervical Surgery

- You don't need or use medicines that cloud your thinking.
- You are taking care of your needs, such as:
 - Bathing
 - Dressing
 - Driving
 - Making meals
 - Light household tasks
- You can move freely through the motions needed for your job. For example; sit, stand, walk, or carry.

How long can I expect to be out of work?

For most people, the timeline of returning to work depends on how physically demanding your job is:

- If you normally don't lift more than 10 pounds and sit for most of your job, your job or activity level is **sedentary**.
 - Your expected return to work will be anywhere from 1-8 weeks after your surgery
- If you normally lift up to 20 pounds and do more regular walking and standing during your day or you use leg controls, such as in bull dozer, your job or activity level is **light**.
 - Your expected return to work will be anywhere from 2-8 weeks after surgery.
- If you normally lift up to 50 pounds, lift objects throughout the day and have to carry up to 20 pounds, your job or activity level is **medium**.
 - Your expected return to work will be anywhere from 6-12 weeks after surgery.
- If you normally lift up to 100 pounds, lift objects often during the day and have to carry up to 50 pounds, your job or activity level is **heavy**.
 - You may return to work and normal activity only after talking with your surgeon at your follow up appointment.

You may have more restrictions. If you do, your surgeon will talk with you about this at your follow-up appointment. If you have questions or concerns about exercise or activity, we can write you a physical therapy referral. Call our office at (207) 885-0011 to ask.

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