Cervical Spine Surgery
Information for patients
Cervical spine surgery

This leaflet explains what to expect when you are in hospital and during the recovery period.

The name of your operation is .................................................................

You should expect to be in hospital ........................................ nights.

You will need to stop the following medication:

...........................................................................................................

for ....................................................... days before the surgery.
The day of admission

On the day of admission at 12.00 noon you need to telephone 01865 231526 to check that a bed is available for you. You will be given a time to come in. Your operation will usually be planned for the next day.

Some people may be asked to come in on the day of their operation. In this case we will tell you when you need to stop eating and drinking and what time to arrive on the day of surgery.

We will always do our best to make sure you have your operation as planned. However, we do have emergency admissions and sometimes a planned operation may have to be postponed.

Arriving at hospital

Please come to the Neurosciences Ward on level 2 in the West Wing of the John Radcliffe Hospital. Parking is available under and around the West Wing building.

When you arrive on level 2, press the buzzer near the door for reception staff to let you in. Please be patient as there may be a delay in the doors being opened. You will be asked to wait in the reception until your bed is ready. We may ask you to complete some paperwork while you wait.

You may need some extra tests and your blood pressure, pulse and temperature will be checked. You will be told approximately what time your operation will be and when to stop eating and drinking.
The day of your operation

The nurse will tell you when to get ready for theatre. We will ask you to take a shower or help you to have a wash using the chlorhexidine wash that you may have been given. We will ask you to wear a theatre gown and special stockings to reduce the risk of a blood clot (deep vein thrombosis) developing in your leg.

The surgeon will see you before your operation to explain the operation and any risks involved and to answer any questions you may have. The anaesthetist will also see you to talk to you about the anaesthetic. You will then be asked to sign the consent form for the operation to go ahead. When it’s time for your operation the nurse will take you down to the anaesthetic room, where we will prepare you for your operation.

After the operation

You will wake up in the recovery room. There will be a drip in the back of your hand and you may have a fine tube in your wound, connected to a drain.

You will be taken back to the ward and we will monitor your pulse, blood pressure and wound regularly. We will offer you regular pain relief. It is important that you tell a nurse if you are feeling sick or if you have pain so we can help make you comfortable. It is also important that you change your position in bed at least once every 2-3 hours; the nurses will help you if necessary.

It is advisable to take pain relief regularly for the first 24-48 hours to keep you comfortable and to help you to move.

When your condition is stable you will be allowed to get out of bed. This may be a few hours after surgery or the next day but will depend on how you are feeling and the instructions from
the surgeon. The tubes will be removed the following day. Be careful not to do too much. The next few days should be seen as an important part of the recovery process.

Some people experience hoarseness in voice and mild difficulty in swallowing. This is usually temporary and should resolve over the next few days.

It is not unusual to experience some discomfort, tingling, numbness or pins and needles after your operation. We expect this to settle with time. If you have increased pain, pins and needles or any other new symptoms you should talk to one of the nurses or doctor, or with your GP if you are at home.

**Going home**

You will be discharged when you are considered fit by the medical and nursing team. This will be assessed on a daily basis.

We ask you to be ready to leave hospital by 10.00am on the day you are due to go home. If it is not possible for you to be collected at 10.00am we will ask you to wait in the discharge lounge until you are collected. Please tell one of the nurses on the day of your admission if you think you will not be collected by 10.00am.

By the time you leave hospital we would expect you to be able to care for yourself, walk up and down stairs and sit in a car for the journey home. It may be sensible to make arrangements for help with shopping, housework, gardening and caring for small children.
Getting back to normal

The length of time that you need to take off work depends on the nature of your job. As a guide you are likely to need about 6 to 8 weeks off work. If possible try and return to work part-time to start with to allow yourself time to recover. We can give you a fitness certificate to cover the time you need to take off work.

Once you are at home you can gradually increase your activity as you feel able, taking care not to do too much too soon. Avoid any heavy lifting or forceful pushing and pulling actions, and allow for periods of rest. Pain killers can be constipating so we encourage you to eat food that will help to keep your bowels working well. Drink plenty of water. Moving around will help to reduce the risk of DVT (blood clots in your legs).

Driving

Driving should be avoided until it’s safe, i.e. when you can look around easily and can make an emergency stop. This can vary but it is usually around two to three weeks after the surgery.

Wound care

The wound on your neck should be clean and dry. The outer dressing will be removed before you go home. You do not need to apply a dressing to the wound unless it is leaking. Wounds on the front of your neck usually have dissolvable stitches, with “butterfly” strips on the outside of the wound. The strips should be left in place for 7 days after surgery. During this time it is important to keep the wound as dry as possible; you can take a shower or bath if you are careful. You need to make an appointment with the nurse at your GPs surgery to have the
strips removed and your wound checked around 7 days after the operation.

With wounds at the back of the neck the stitches can be removed after 7-10 days by a nurse at your GP’s surgery.

If your wound becomes red, swollen, sore, or leaks you should see your GP as soon as possible.

An outpatient follow-up appointment will be sent to you for approximately 12 weeks after your operation.

Questions or concerns
If you have any questions that you would like to discuss before you come into hospital, or after you have left hospital, you can contact one of the Nurse Practitioners on:

Direct line    Tel: **01865 234975**

If we are unavailable to take the call, please leave a message with your name and contact telephone number and we will get back to you as soon as we can. The messages are checked daily. Please note there is no evening or weekend Nurse Practitioner service.

For urgent advice please contact your GP.

Your Nurse Practitioner contact: ...........................................................................................................
If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call 01865 221473 or email PALSJR@orh.nhs.uk

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