These instructions will help you take care of yourself at home until your next appointment with your surgeon. Following them will help you to feel better and heal more quickly. Your surgeon may change the instructions to fit your particular needs.

**Incision care**
The head wrap will be removed 2 days after surgery. It is better to leave the incision line open to the air, but you may wear a cap, hat or scarf. When putting on or taking off a hat, be careful not to pull on the incision line if threads get tangled in the sutures or staples.

Keep the incision line clean and dry until the sutures or staples have been removed or longer if the incision has not healed over. Do not apply any ointments such as Neosporin or lotions to your incision line until it is completely healed. The sutures or staples will need to be removed in the Neurosurgery Clinic or by your family doctor one to two weeks after surgery.

**Shower and bath**
For at least four days after surgery, keep the incision line dry. Wear a shower cap when bathing, showering or swimming. Do not allow water to spray directly on the incision line until the sutures or staples have been removed because the water pressure could open the incision.

**Activities**
For the first 4 to 6 weeks after surgery, do not lift anything heavier than 5 pounds or do any kind of heavy exercises. The best exercise after surgery is walking. You should begin walking short distances immediately after surgery and gradually increase the distance to 1 to 2 miles daily. This will allow you to increase your overall strength and endurance. Wear comfortable, low-heeled shoes and stay on flat, even surfaces. You may climb stairs as soon as you feel like it. Be sure to use the handrail.

**Driving**
Your physician will tell you when it is safe to begin driving. You may ride as a passenger. If you will be riding in a car for long distances, plan to stop every hour or 1 1/2 hour to stretch and walk around for a few minutes.
Returning to work
The type of work you do and the demands of your job will determine when you are able to return to work. Your doctor will discuss this with you during your follow-up appointment 4 to 6 weeks after surgery.

Medicines
Your doctor will give you prescriptions before you leave the hospital, and your nurse will help you understand how to take them. Do not stop taking any medicine without your physician’s approval. You can expect a certain amount of pain after surgery until the inflammation and sensitivity of the nerves has decreased. As you heal, you should need less pain medicine. The prescription is usually not refilled. Call your doctor if you still have considerable pain when you have taken all your pain medicine.

Constipation is a side effect of taking pain medicine. You may need to drink more water, increase the fiber in your diet, and take a stool softener or laxative that you can buy without a prescription.

Nutrition
Eating a well balanced diet is important for proper wound healing. This includes foods from each basic food group—dairy products, meat, vegetables, fruit and bread. Since you will be less active during your recovery, you may want to avoid high calorie foods.

Call your doctor at (615) 322-7417* or your nurse at _____________ if you...
• notice a change in the skin around the incision, such as redness or swelling, or any drainage from the incision line
• can't walk, speak, or use your hands like you normally can
• have a severe headache that pain medicine does not relieve
• cannot see improvement in your pain after surgery
• faint, "pass out" or have a seizure
• become very sleepy and have difficulty staying awake, even with your usual amount of sleep and periods of rest
• have fever or chills with a temperature of 101.5 degrees or higher
• have nausea and vomiting that does not let up
• have any questions or concerns

*This phone number is also answered at night and on the weekend for emergency calls.