Spinal Fusion for Neuromuscular Scoliosis

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS FOR CHILDREN

These instructions will help you take care of yourself at home after your back surgery.

ACTIVITIES

• **Traveling.** You may ride as a passenger, but if you ride for long distances, you should stop every hour or so and change positions.

• **Lifting.** When you are lifted, your entire spine must be supported under your buttocks as well as behind your back. Avoid lifting anything heavier than 5 - 10 pounds. To compare weights, a gallon of milk weighs 8 pounds.

• **Twisting.** Avoid twisting your spine for six weeks. Instead, turn your whole body in the direction you want to go. You need to be logrolled when you are in bed.

• **Bending.** Do not bend at the waist or stoop over. Bend at the knees and keep your back straight. If you carry anything, hold it close to your body. If you use a wheel chair, lean forward at your hips, not your waist.

• **Exercise.** Avoid all strenuous activities. Avoid sudden movements. You may sit in a chair or wheel chair as much as you are able. By the time you return to your doctor for your first clinic visit, you should be sitting up most of the day. You may push yourself in your wheelchair when you can do it comfortably.

SHOWERING AND BATHING

You may have staples or stitches that your doctor wants you to keep dry. Check with your doctor before taking a bath or shower. It may be allowed 7 to 10 days after you leave the hospital or after your first clinic visit. Remember, you must have your brace on when you get in the bathtub. Then take it off before bathing. After your bath, dry off completely. Put on the brace before getting out of the tub. It may be easier to have someone help you with this.

SCHOOL

Before leaving the hospital, ask your doctor about returning to school. Most students go back 2 to 3 weeks after their surgery. Some go back even sooner.
PAIN
You can expect a certain amount of pain. You will get a prescription for medicine to help relieve it. Short rest periods and short walks will also help. As you heal, you will have less pain and need less pain medicine. Increase the time between pills, and take fewer pills.

MEALS
A well-balanced diet will help you heal faster. Since you will not be getting much exercise while you begin to heal, it’s especially important to avoid fattening foods. Pain medicine and inactivity often cause constipation. Make sure you eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables and other high fiber foods.

Call your doctor if you have...
• any change in the wound or skin such as more redness, swelling or drainage of any kind
• more pain, weakness or numbness in your legs, hand or arm
• fever above 101.5°F or chills
• weakness or numbness in your legs, hands or arms
• unusual discomfort because of the brace

Important phone numbers
Vanderbilt University Hospital (615) 322-7131
Nights and weekends, ask for the orthopaedic resident on call

To make an appointment
(615) 343-5875

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