Dr. Eromo's Post-Operative Instructions
following Cervical Spine Surgery

Medications: You will be given a prescription(s) for medication upon discharge from the hospital. Please follow the instructions for administration closely.

- If you are taking antibiotics, take them until the bottle is completely finished.
- Refills for medication are to be requested by 3:00 pm.
- NO NARCOTIC REFILLS will be given over the weekend or after 3:00 pm weekdays.
- Please expect a 48-hour turnaround time on prescriptions once you call in your request.

Follow-up appointments:

- Unless otherwise indicated, your first post-operative appointment will be approximately 2 weeks following your surgery. If you do not have a have an appointment already scheduled, please call our office at 518-697-6000 Monday through Friday between 8:30 and 4:30pm to schedule.

Incision Care:

- Check your incision daily for the first 2 weeks for any sign of infection. These signs include increased warmth or redness to the area, swelling, drainage or unexplained increasing pain at the incision site.
- A small amount of reddish-brown drainage is not unusual for the first few days post-op. Please report any other type or amount of drainage to our office.
- You must keep the incision dry until 5 days post-operatively. Until then, cover the area while showering.
- After 5 days, gently wash the incision daily with warm water and mild soap. Please remove the dressing before showering.

Dressing changes:

- You may change the gauze dressing the day after you return home.
- The dressing may be discontinued 24 hours after the incision stops draining or spotting.
- Steri-strips (adhesive skin closures) should be kept on the incision until 14 days following surgery.
- Remember to gently dry the incision area/steri-strips after showering. It is common for the edges of the steri-strips to loosen and curl. Simply clip the frayed edges but leave the strips on for 14 days unless they are so loose that they are no longer functional. In this case, you may gently lift off the strips.
- Do NOT apply cream or ointment to the incision.

**Pain Expectations:**

- After Cervical Surgery, you will have predictable muscle pain for up to six weeks post-operatively.
- A sore throat and hoarseness often occur after intubation for anesthesia.
- Some patients may experience difficulty swallowing.
- After all surgeries, inflammation is a natural process of healing. We cannot, and do not want to, block this process. Please know that we can take the “edge” off your pain, but we may not be able to stop ALL of your pain. You should be encouraged by the “good” days and by the “bad” days getting further apart.

**General Information:**

- Activity, especially walking around your home, is encouraged.
- No special exercises are necessary for the first 6 weeks post-op.
- Do NOT do heavy housework, such as bed-making, vacuuming or laundry for the first 2 wks.
- NO bending, lifting, twisting, pulling or pushing greater than 10 pounds for the first 6 weeks post-op.
- With the use of narcotic pain medication, constipation is common. An increased intake of water, 6 to 8 glasses per day, will increase the ease of bowel movements. Increasing your intake of fiber with a daily supplement such as Metamucil is often helpful.
- Do NOT drive until after we have seen you at your first post-op visit, unless otherwise approved.
  - Riding in the car or taking public transportation is okay.
- You may resume normal sexual activity after 2 weeks, as tolerated.
- Cervical Spine Fusion patients cannot smoke for 6 months after surgery. This includes avoidance of smokeless tobacco, nicotine patches and nicotine gum. Patients must also avoid exposure to smoke from other smokers.
- If your surgeon has instructed you to wear a brace, your Aspen collar is to be worn at all times unless showering. For showering, use the Philadelphia collar. This is only for cervical fusion patients whom your surgeon has specifically verbalized the need to wear a brace both preoperatively and post-operatively. For most cervical fusion patients, this does not apply.
  - Do not discontinue using your brace until cleared to do so.
- Please be sure to inform any other physician or dentist planning surgery for you in the first 6 months post-operatively. This includes deep dental cleaning. We suggest your physician or dentist use the American Heart Association Guidelines for antibiotic prophylaxis.
**Remember:** Call our office immediately if:

- You have increased drainage and/or odor from your wound.
- You have increased redness or swelling at the incision site or unexplained incisional pain.
- You have a fever of greater than 101 degrees.
- You have a new or unfamiliar pain or weakness in your arms or legs.
- You have difficulty with urination or bowel movements, or pain or numbness in the rectal, vaginal or scrotal area.

If you are experiencing any of the above problems after 5pm weeknights or on weekends, please call **The Spine Institute** office number **(518-697-6000)** which will be directed to the hospital Switchboard Answering Service. They will direct you on how to proceed. Thank you.