



*Life in Motion*

**Dr. Hammer**  
**3909 9<sup>TH</sup> AVE SW**  
**Olympia, WA 98502**  
**360-570-3460**

## **Anterior Cervical Discectomy and Fusion**

**What to expect after my surgery:**

**This surgery may be done as an outpatient, overnight hospital stay or admission.**

**Hospital stay:** You can expect to be in the hospital anywhere between 1-3 days pending your progress and possibly longer if necessary. Dr. Hammer will round daily and check on your progress. Criteria for discharge is vital signs stable, swallowing liquids, walking without difficulty, urinating without difficulty, pain tolerable with the oral medication, no nausea, vomiting, fever, chills, shortness of breath.

**Collar:** You will be wearing a cervical collar for up to 6 weeks. The purpose is to remind you to stand in a good posture, ensure proper body mechanics, as well as provide additional stability and support while you heal. You do not need to wear the collar in bed **UNLESS SPECIFICALLY INSTRUCTED BY DR. HAMMER**. You should wear it when out of bed. Dr. Hammer will discuss weaning off the collar as an outpatient.

-You have a metal plate and screws (made of non-magnetic titanium or cobalt-chrome so that it will not interfere with an MRI scan) to stabilize your neck as part of the surgery. This will stabilize the bones until a solid fusion has occurred.

**Diet and Swallowing:** Swallowing may be difficult for the first few days, up to a couple weeks. Soft diet is recommended such as applesauce, pudding, yogurt, scrambled eggs, etc., advancing textures as tolerated. Protein shakes, Boost, Ensure are good for nutrition if having trouble eating. You may crush medications that we have prescribed and put them in applesauce to help get them down if trouble swallowing them.

**Icing** (20 minutes on, 20 minutes off) the incision will help with swelling. Eating popsicles or ice chips will help reduce swelling of your throat as well as soothe the sore throat. **DO NOT USE HEAT PACKS ON THE INCISION, THIS COULD CAUSE AN INFECTION.**

**Medications:** Prescriptions will be prescribed to you prior to surgery and sent to your pharmacy electronically. If you need a refill of any of the prescriptions, please call our clinic at **(360) 709-6223**



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and leave a message of what medication(s) you need refilled. Please call at least 48-72 hours prior to being out of your medication as we cannot refill narcotic medications after hours or on weekends. Please check your pharmacy the day after you called to see if they have your prescription ready.

You may resume your home medications with the exception of NSAID'S (Ibuprofen, Aleve, Advil, Naproxin, diclofenac, meloxicam) which need to be held for 3 months as these medications delay bone healing. Anticoagulant's must be held for 14 post surgery due to risk of bleeding.

**Symptoms:**

You may experience muscle pain in the back of the neck and shoulders. Pain, numbness, weakness, or tingling that was present prior to surgery that persists. This may last awhile as the nerve needs time to heal. Icing the incision will help with swelling. Eating popsicles or ice chips will help reduce swelling of your throat as well as soothe the sore throat. DO NOT USE HEAT PACKS ON THE INCISION, THIS COULD CAUSE AN INFECTION.

**Incision:** You will have a dressing that is made up of island dressing and/or steri-strips. There are dissolvable sutures under the skin that do not need to be removed. These help hold the skin together until it heals. The steri-strips will fall off by themselves. You will be contacted and scheduled by Dr. Hammer's office for a wound check appointment for 10-14 days after surgery if you were not already scheduled. Any residual steri-strips will be removed at that time.

**Therapy:** Occupational, and/or physical therapies may be ordered as part of your recovery program in the hospital. The therapists and social workers will help you plan for this possibility. Upon discharge, walking will be your therapy. You do not need to have a formal course of therapy right away. This may be discussed at your 6 week post op appointment.

**\*\*CONSTIPATION:** The pain medication often causes constipation, take the prescribed stool softener (Colace) and Miralax daily as long as you are on the pain medication. You may also add Senna to Miralax. Limiting the amount of narcotics will help improve constipation. Increase fluids, fresh fruit (prunes) and vegetables high in fiber. If you have not had a bowel movement within 1-2 days after returning home from the hospital, over the counter medication may be purchased at most drug stores: Magnesium Citrate (liquid), suppository, or enema. Start this by day 3 or 4 if unable to have a bowel movement. Please call our office for further suggestions to help with this.

**For any post-operative problems or concerns, call  
(360) 709-6223**