

# SPINAL CORD STIMULATOR POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS & INFORMATION

## Bradley Heiges, MD

### IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING SURGERY:

- The stimulator will be turned on at your post-operative visit the week following surgery.
- Wear your brace for comfort, stability and to prevent the stimulator from moving. Depending on where the stimulator was placed, this will be a cervical collar or lumbar corset. You may remove the brace to eat, sleep, and when seated or resting. It is recommended that you wear your brace for 6 weeks.
- You may shower 48hrs after surgery. You can get the incision wet but avoid saturation and pat-dry excessive moisture. Avoid tub bathing or swimming for 4 weeks following your surgery.
- The incision is generally closed with dissolvable suture that does not need to be removed or cut. Occasionally, the suture used will be tied outside the skin. This looks similar to fishing line and will be removed at the first post-op visit. Other types of closure (staples, traditional suture), can be used and are patient dependent (obesity, diabetes, previous back surgery). These too will be removed at your first post-op visit.
- You may change the exterior dressing 48hrs after surgery. Leave the bandage strips directly over the incision intact; these promote healing, prevent infection, and will fall off on their own.

### Please contact our office if you experience any of the following signs and symptoms:

- **Temperature > 101.5. Some temperature fluctuations are normal as your body responds to surgery.**
- **Any opening, significant drainage, redness or increased swelling at your incision site. Some drainage is normal early on in all patients and is often seen in patients with diabetes or who have had previous surgery.**

### HELPFUL HINTS:

The biggest concern following a Spinal Cord Stimulator implantation is migration of the stimulation electrodes away from where they were placed during surgery. Movement of the electrodes can result in loss of stimulation and/or unwanted stimulation. If the electrodes do migrate, it will likely necessitate additional surgery to reposition the electrodes to their original location. Unfortunately, lead migration can happen spontaneously but it usually is preventable with activity limitations/modifications..

### MEDICATIONS:

- You may resume all of your pre-operative medications the day after surgery
- Take your Antibiotic as prescribed and completely finish the prescription.
- Pain medication will be issued by your pain management physician or provided on the day of surgery.

### ACTIVITY:

- **Avoid bending or twisting at the waist.** If you must bend, squat using your knees to lower your body while keeping your back and neck straight. Keep your shoulders and hips aligned when moving or getting out of bed.
- Limit lifting and carrying to less than 5 pounds and keep objects between your chest and waist; No overhead lifting or carrying below the waist.
- You may travel in a car as a passenger only for the first week. Limit travel distance to less than 10 miles.
- At night, avoid sleeping on your stomach. Consider elevating the head of your bed to keep your spine straight and stabilized. If the stimulator was placed in your neck, use a thin soft pillow.

- Walking is encouraged and beneficial to you early on in your recovery.
- Driving - You may begin to start driving 3 weeks after your surgery when you feel up to it and you have adequate ROM to safely drive. Start with short distances initially and increase as comfort allows. **DO NOT** drive while under the influence of your post-op medication.

### **FOLLOW-UP CARE:**

Post-Operative appointments will be with either Dr. Heiges or one of his Mid-level providers Jonathan Thornton PA-C and Harold Jackson NP-C. These appointments will consist of a clinical evaluation as well as an x-ray to assess instrumentation and evaluate the fusion. Typically, post-operative appointments will be made at 2, 6, and 12 weeks following your surgery and as needed thereafter.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND RESOURCES:**

The following websites are useful for additional information regarding spinal conditions and surgical treatment:

<http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/menus/spine.cfm>

<http://knowyourback.org/Pages/Default.aspx>

<http://www.spineuniverse.com>

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## **QUESTIONS?**

**Call Dr. Heiges' office at 912.644.5300**

210 East DeRenne Avenue  
Savannah, GA 31405

**[Spine.OptimHealth.com](http://Spine.OptimHealth.com)**

00636-SpinalCordStimulator

