

## What to Expect Over the Next Few Months

# Taking Care of Yourself After Your *Posterior Cervical Foraminotomy or Discectomy*

### Call your doctor if

- You have new weakness, numbness or tingling down your arms or legs.
- Your pain becomes severe. It may be possible to relieve swelling with medications.

## First Month

### Less pain

Your arm pain should begin to fade during your hospital stay. Numbness and weakness can last for several more weeks or months, depending on how much the nerve was compressed.

During the first month after surgery, the muscles of your neck will heal. The best thing you can do to help the healing is to avoid stress on your neck. A week after surgery, you should exercise your neck by slowly going through the normal range of motion each day to prevent stiffness. This will become easier with time and should be nearly normal by one month after surgery.

The pain from the incision should decrease in the first month as the muscles heal from surgery.

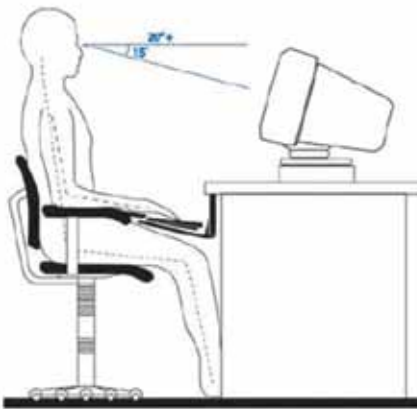
In many cases tingling and “memory” pain can arise, particularly 4 to 7 days after the operation, even if the surgery was effective in relieving the pain initially. This is common and is likely related to swelling

of the nerve. This is usually not permanent.

### What you can do

Protect your healing neck by being careful what you do:

- There are no limitations on **sitting, walking or standing.**
- **Don't lift** or carry more than 5 to 10 pounds – about a gallon of milk. Keep what you are carrying close to your body to prevent stress on your spine.
- There are no limitations on **reclining.**



Your reading materials or computer monitor should be near or just slightly below eye level.

- **Don't go jogging or running.**
- Don't **twist** your neck.
- When you **read**, place the materials near eye level (15 degrees below the horizon) to reduce stress on your neck.
- When you use a **computer**, make sure the screen is at eye level. Keep the keyboard in a neutral position with your elbows bent at 90 degrees.
- Ask your doctor when **sexual activity** is safe for your neck.

Driving is permitted when you are no longer on pain medications and can safely control the car.

## Second and Third Months

### What you can do

With your doctor's permission, you can return to your previous activities as you feel you are able to.

### Returning to Work

Return to work when you feel ready or as directed by your surgeon.