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GUIDELINES FOR LIFESTYLE AFTER CERVICAL SURGERY

*These are designed as general guidelines.
If an exercise or activity causes pain either leave it out or do it more gently.*

General

- Look after your back
- Bend your knees, not your back
- Log roll in and out of bed as you were taught in hospital
- Try to keep you back straight and head upright during activities
- Do not lift any items above your shoulders
- Do not lift and turn at the same time
- Avoid lifting anything heavier than 2-3 kilograms

Personal Care

- Choose clothes that fasten at the front instead of pulling over the head; stand up to dry upper body.
- Sit down to dry lower body
- Sit down to cut toenails
- Avoid bending over
- To wash face, use a washer
- To clean your teeth, use a glass to rinse your mouth

Dressing

- Try to choose clothes that fasten at the front, instead of pulling over the head
- A dressing stick may be useful for zips
- Sit down to put on underwear, trousers and stockings

Meal Preparation

- Avoid bending, lifting or stretching your back
- Avoid lifting heavy saucepans, slide them across the benches
- Double handles distribute the load more evenly
- Use lightweight colander for draining vegetables or serve straight from the pot using a perforated spoon
- A pick up stick may be useful
- Washing up, it may be easier to use a bowl on the bench if a sink causes you to bend

Cleaning

- Avoid heavy cleaning including heavy vacuuming and scrubbing
- For low level jobs, use long handled appliances

Laundry

- Avoid bending and twisting of your back when pulling clothes out of baskets and washing machines
- Do not lift out a bundle of clothes, separate them first

Driving

- Avoid driving unless you discuss this with your doctor at your first check up appointment

Ironing

- If possible leave it set up all the time
- Store iron in cupboard within easy reach
- Remember to turn your whole body and feet when removing clothes from basket

Gardening

- Best done in moderation
- Avoid bending and twisting movements
- Kneel on one knee when weeding
- Use long handled tools to reduce amount of bending

Shopping

- Home delivery, most supermarkets will deliver to your home
- Avoid heavy shopping bags and trolleys
- If it is essential to carry a shopping bag, divide the weight evenly into 2 bags, one on each arm

Wound Care & Removal of Sutures

On discharge from hospital you will be provided with a fresh dressing for your wound. If the dressing were to become wet or stained, the dressing can be removed and gently cleaned and a new dressing applied. It is not uncommon for the wound to have some slight redness around it as it heals, but should you develop fevers, sweats, discharge, swelling or increasing pain this may be a sign of infection. If you were to have concern regarding infection you can either; contact Prof. D'Urso, ask your GP to inspect the wound, or return to the Epworth Emergency Department for immediate attention.

Prof. D'Urso will usually place a single blue stitch in the wound and this needs to be removed after approximately 10 days. The stitch needs to be cut and gently pulled out.

Removal of your sutures can be performed by either:

- Your partner
- Relative
- General practitioner's nurse.

Once the sutures have been removed, wait a further two days before swimming.

Postural Awareness after Cervical Spine Surgery

Sitting Posture

- *Sit upright with head erect in high-backed, supportive chairs.*
- *Avoid soft couches and armchairs.*
- *Try using a roll in the lower back to help maintain spinal curves (this will reduce the tendency for your head to sag forwards).*
- *Keep your shoulders relaxed*



Standing Posture

- *Keep your ears over your shoulders and your hips over your ankles.*
- *Avoid slouching and allowing the head to droop forwards.*
- *Try to "feel tall".*
- *Keep your shoulders back and your abdominal muscles gently tightened.*



Daily Activities

- ***Keep your shoulders back and chin tucked in.***
- ***Lift light objects only (less than 1kg or about the weight of a litre of milk), keeping your body upright and the object close to your chest.***
- ***Avoid activities that involve raising your arms overhead for lifting or long periods.***
- ***Bend your knees rather than bending forward from the waist.***

