

CERVICAL SPINE PATIENTS

DRIVING

- **NO DRIVING AT ALL WHILE YOUR COLLAR IS STILL ON.** Once you are out of the collar and have adequate range of motion to safely see you may drive. You would be at extreme liability if you drive with your collar on and you got in an accident due to your limited range of motion.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

- Chew foods carefully and thoroughly since you will have some swelling in your throat for the first few weeks.
- Make sure that you are sitting up when eating or taking pills.
- The first 3-5 days after surgery you will feel the most discomfort in the back across your shoulders, between your shoulder blades and at the base of your neck. This is a normal response from your neck muscles and will improve after about 5 days.
- You will also notice some pain, numbness and tingling that comes and goes as the nerves are trying to wake up over the next 6-8 weeks.

SLEEP FOLLOWING SURGERY

- You will probably feel more comfortable propped up than lying flat for the first few weeks after surgery.
- Feel free to explore sleeping in a recliner if you have one. If you do not have one, then just prop several pillows under you and try sleeping on your bed or on your couch like this.
- There is not a right or a wrong place to sleep. You need to sleep wherever you are most comfortable.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR WEARING YOUR COLLAR

- Wear your collar at all times for 2 weeks both when you are asleep and awake
- After these 2 weeks, wear your collar when out of bed.
- At 8 weeks gradually wean out of your collar as directed below.

HOW TO WEAN OUT OF YOUR COLLAR

- You may start weaning out of your collar at 8 weeks.
- At this time you can start by taking the collar off and then leaving it off until your head feels heavy and you feel pressure on your shoulders. When this happens put the collar back on.
- Try again when you feel like your muscles have had a chance to rest.
- You will find that you will be able to leave the collar off for increasing amounts of time until you are completely out of the collar
- There is not a set amount of time that it should take you to wean out of your collar. You can do this as quickly or as slowly as is comfortable for you.
- Even after you have completely weaned yourself out of the collar you can still use it periodically for short periods of time if you are having any discomfort.