



Frequently Asked Questions – Anterior Cervical Discectomy and Fusion (ACDF)

Preparing for Surgery

How will I know what to do to prepare for surgery?

Your surgeon's office staff will provide you with information on how to obtain medical clearance for your surgery. You will also receive a call from a nurse at the hospital who will gather information from you, as well as provide you with further instructions on what to do to prepare for the surgery. They will guide you on eating and drinking requirements, skin cleaning requirements, and schedule you for COVID testing if needed. You will be asked to attend an information session regarding the type of surgery you are scheduled to have. This session is sometimes done electronically.

When do I need to do my Covid test? Where can I get it done?

A COVID-19 test will be arranged for you at the hospital (if not already done by your primary care doctor). This will need to be done 48-96 hours before surgery. You will be contacted by the hospital to schedule the test.

How do I prepare my skin for the procedure?

Use a special cleaning substance called Hibiclens with every shower starting the evening before surgery and again on the morning of your surgery. (Total of 2 showers).

Where on my body do I wash with Hibiclens?

You should wash from the neck down. Avoid using the Hibiclens on your face or to wash your genitals as it can irritate sensitive areas.

Do I have to change my sheets after using the Hibiclens?

We recommend changing your sheet after using the Hibiclens the evening before surgery.

Do I need clean towels and washcloth for each shower?

Yes, you should use a clean washcloth and a clean towel with each Hibiclens shower

What types of drinks CAN I have the night before surgery?

We recommend clear liquids up, or up to 2 hours before your surgery time If you are diabetic or have digestive problems. Examples of clear liquids are:

- Water
- Gatorade (NOT red or purple)
- Clear sodas
- Gelatin (NOT red or purple AND WITHOUT fruit)
- Tea/Coffee (NO cream)
- Juices WITHOUT pulp (apple, white grape)
- Popsicles (NOT red or purple AND NOT containing fruit particles or cream)

Do I bring my own medications to the hospital?

You do not need to bring your own medications to the hospital. Your medications will be administered to you there. If a medication is on your list and is not available in the hospital's pharmacy, you will be instructed to bring that medication with you to the hospital, on the morning of surgery, in its original container from the pharmacy. The medication will be collected by your nurse and verified by the hospital's pharmacy. It will then be dispensed to you by your nurse. You should NOT take any medications on your own while in the hospital, without the approval of your nurse.

Do I take my Insulin and other diabetic medications before I come to hospital?

You should not take any diabetic medications, including Insulin, on the morning of surgery. Instructions regarding your medications will be given to you by your primary care provider, and verified during the pre-operative phone call with the nurse.

Surgery and the Hospital Stay

How long will I stay in the hospital?

Neck surgery patients usually have an overnight stay in the hospital. Some patients might stay an additional day if they have a change in their chronic medical condition or the development of an unforeseen issue. It is possible you could be discharged the same day.

How long does an ACDF surgery take?

The front approach (anterior) takes 2 - 4 hours.

What type of anesthesia will I get?

Cervical surgery patients receive general anesthesia. General anesthesia requires a breathing tube to breathe for you during surgery.

Can my family member spend the night in the hospital with me?

Typically, an adult family member is allowed to spend the night. Currently, Due to COVID-19 guidelines, the visitor policy has been revised and visitors are not allowed in the hospital. The visitor policy will be revisited and updated as COVID-19 conditions change.

How will you manage my pain?

You will be given different types of pain medication starting in the pre-op area on the morning of surgery. These medications manage the different types of pain that is expected. Your surgeon will prescribe these medications for you to have after your surgery is over as well. Your medications will be adjusted by the neurosurgical team based on how you are doing and what you are feeling. Some of the medications will be automatically administered by your nurse at set times. Others, such as narcotic medications will be given to you at a set time frame as needed. You will be given prescriptions for one-week supply of pain medication once you are discharged from the hospital. Your surgeon will assess for the need for further pain medication need at your follow-up visit. If you normally see a pain specialist, you must secure an appointment with your pain specialist for 1 week after discharge, to ensure that your pain management regimen will not be interrupted.

How will my wound be closed?

Your wound will be closed with absorbable internal sutures (on the inside layers) and steri-strips on the skin.

Should I expect to have shortness of breath or trouble swallowing after my neck surgery?

You may have a sore throat after surgery. You should not expect to have shortness of breath. Any shortness of breath or sudden loss of the ability to swallow your own saliva secretions is an emergency and you should call 911 if you are not at the hospital when this occurs.

Will I need a neck brace after surgery?

You will have either a hard or soft collar depending on surgeon's preference.

How long will I need to wear my cervical collar after surgery?

You should wear your neck brace or cervical collar as instructed until you follow up with your surgeon after discharge from the hospital. Your surgeon will guide you on the continued use of the neck brace or cervical collar at that follow up visit.

Recovery

When can I drive?

Driving after discharge from the hospital is determined by your surgeon at your follow-up post-operative visit. This visit is usually 10-14 days weeks after discharge.

When is it safe to resume sex after surgery?

Your surgeon will let you know at your follow-up visit when sexual relations may be safely resumed.