



Department of Surgery

Spinal Cord Stimulation: After Your Surgery

Here are common questions people have after spinal cord stimulation surgery:

How do I care for the wound?

You may shower as directed by your surgeon. Do NOT take a tub bath or submerge yourself in water for 4 weeks. Pat your incision dry with a soft towel to avoid irritation.

Inspect the incision twice a day.

Fluid may build up under the skin around the catheter or pump. If this happens, swelling will occur. **Call the surgeon if swelling occurs.** Fluid buildup usually goes away on its own, but sometimes this fluid may need to be drained.

Will I be in pain?

Right after surgery, you will receive narcotic medication to manage your pain. Narcotics can become addictive, so they are used for a limited time (2-4 weeks).

Regular use may cause constipation, so drink lots of water and eat high-fiber foods. Laxatives (Dulcolax, Senekot, or Milk of Magnesia) may be bought over the counter (no prescription is needed).

After a few weeks, you can manage your pain with acetaminophen (Tylenol) and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). Examples are aspirin, ibuprofen, Advil, Motrin, Nuprin, Aleve or naproxen sodium.

Some people experience spinal headaches. They are caused by leakage or loss of cerebrospinal fluid around the lead site. For relief, lie flat and drink plenty of caffeinated fluids that are non-carbonated.

Are there limits to what I can do?

To prevent moving the lead, do NOT perform these activities for 6-8 weeks:

- Bend, twist, stretch or lift objects above 5 pounds
- Raise your arms above your head
- Sleep on your stomach
- Climb lots of stairs
- Sit for long periods
- Drive for 2-4 weeks or until approved by your surgeon

Walking is a good activity to do. Start with a short distance and gradually increase to 1-2 miles a day.

When should I call the surgeon?

Call the surgeon's office if you have any of the following:

- Fever over 101°F
- Drainage from your incision
- Increased redness or swelling of the incision
- Headache that lasts more than 48 hours

NOTE: If you have sudden or severe back pain, sudden onset of leg weakness and spasm, loss of bladder and/or bowel function, **THIS IS AN EMERGENCY SITUATION. GO TO THE HOSPITAL AT ONCE AND CALL YOUR SURGEON.**