What to Expect at Home:

Your Recovery

You will probably feel very tired for several weeks after surgery. You may also have headaches or problems concentrating. It can take 4 to 8 weeks to recovery from surgery. Your incisions may be sore for several days after surgery. You may also have numbness and shooting pains near your wound, or swelling and bruising around your eyes. As your wound starts to heal, it may begin to itch. Medicines and ice packs can help with the headaches, pain, swelling and itching.

This care sheet gives you a general idea about how long it will take for you to recover. However, each person recovers at a different pace. Follow the steps below to get better as quickly as possible.

Please call your surgeon’s office if you experience any of the following:

- Pain that is worse than before the surgery or pain that is not relieved by rest or the use of pain medication.
- New visual changes: For example, blurry or double vision.
- Difficulty with swallowing or breathing.
- Fever above 101 degrees Fahrenheit and/or shaking chills, redness, swelling, increased soreness, warmth or drainage from your incision.
- Persistent nausea or vomiting.
- Confusion or increasing sleepiness.
- Weakness or decreased coordination, difficulty with balance or walking, or seizure activity.

If you are unable to reach your doctor, go directly to the nearest Emergency Room or call 911.

Medicines & Pain Control:

- Always take your pain medication with food.
- Do not drink beer, wine or hard liquor while taking pain medication.
- Take your pain medication as recommended by your doctor.
- You are advised against driving or operating any machinery while taking your prescription pain medication.
- To reduce swelling and inflammation, we suggest that you apply ice packs over the wound or dressing for 10-15 minutes every two hours for the first 24 hours after surgery. This can help decrease incisional pain and swelling.
- If you take blood thinners, such as warfarin (Coumadin), clopidogrel (Plavix) or aspirin, be sure to talk to your doctor. He or she will tell you if and when to start taking those medicines again. Make sure that you understand exactly what your doctor wants you to do.
Activity:

• Rest when you feel tired. It is normal to want to sleep during the day. It is a good idea to plan to take a nap every day. Getting enough sleep will help you recover.
• Try not to lie flat when you rest or sleep. You can use a wedge pillow, or you can put a rolled towel or foam padding under your pillow.
• You may drive ONCE CLEARED BY A PHYSICIAN and if you are no longer taking narcotic pain medication, you feel like you can safely engage in that activity, and you normally operate a car. If you are on anti-seizure medications or if you have had a seizure, you should not drive until you have been told that it is safe for you to do so.
• Take effort to avoid and prevent falls.
• For the first week, you may find that you are more comfortable when you keep your head elevated by sitting or the use of a couple of pillows when you sleep.
• Avoid heavy-lifting and straining. A reasonable lifting limit would be 10-20 pounds. Your activity level can be modified at your follow-up appointment with your doctor.

Hygiene and Dressing:

• Do not take a tub bath, swim or immerse your surgical area in water until your incision has fully healed.
• Make sure you or someone else checks your incision daily for redness or swelling.
• If you have a dressing, keep it clean and dry for 24 hours. If the dressing becomes wet, you may need to apply a fresh, dry dressing.
• Limit touching the wound directly until it has healed.
• Do not apply ointments or creams to your wound until it has healed and there is no scab or opening of the skin edges.
• You may shower on the second post-op day.

Your incision may be closed with the following method(s):

• Sutures
• Staples
• Dermabond (skin glue)

Your provider will give you specific instructions on any necessary follow-up care after your surgery.

Diet:

• Eat small, frequent meals at first and increase as tolerated. Take extra dietary sources of fiber or over-the-counter preparations to avoid constipation, especially while taking your pain medications.
• Take efforts to avoid straining to have a bowel movement.

Return to Work:

• You may return to work as per discussions with your surgeon.
• Additional Restrictions: As noted or per discussions with your surgeon.

Follow-up:

• Call our office at 207-885-0011 within 3 business days after your surgery to schedule or confirm your follow-up appointment.
• For all emergencies call 911.
• If you have any questions or paperwork (such as disability forms), please bring them to your next appointment.
• Contact your Primary Care Physician for on-going healthcare maintenance.