After Scoliosis and Kyphosis Surgery – Home Care

The following are guidelines to follow at home as your child recovers from scoliosis and kyphosis surgery:

**Incision Care:**

Keep the incision clean and dry. Steri-Strip™ adhesive skin closures were placed along your child’s incision while it heals. Do not remove these. They will peel off over time. Your doctor will tell you if dressing changes need to be done. Observe the incision for redness, swelling, tenderness, warmth, drainage, sores, foul odor and/or opening or separation of the incision. For one year after surgery, be sure to apply sunscreen with at least #30 sun block to the incision area before your child goes out into the sun.

**Healing:**

Smoking interferes with bone healing. There should be no smoking in the house where your child lives. All smoking should be avoided.

**Bathing:**

Your child may shower on _____/_____/. Do not allow your child to bathe or soak in a bathtub.

**Diet:**

Encourage your child to eat a well balanced diet that includes a variety of foods. Until your child’s appetite returns to normal, encourage high calorie foods (dairy products, meats, eggs, Carnation Instant Breakfast®). Encourage fluids (water and fruit juices) and a high fiber diet (fruits, grains, and vegetables) to help prevent constipation.

**Medications:**

1. **Iron therapy:** Your child’s doctor may order iron replacement therapy to help your child produce new red blood cells.

2. **Pain medication:** Give the medication as ordered by your child’s doctor. Giving pain medication 20 minutes before your child is active may help decrease discomfort. Pain medication will gradually be needed less often as your child recovers. Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) can be used instead of the prescription pain medication for pain that is not severe. As your child recovers, acetaminophen should work to provide comfort and pain relief. Do not give ibuprofen products, such as Motrin® and Advil®.

3. **Stool softener:** This may be recommended to prevent constipation. Constipation may occur due to your child’s decreased activity, prescription pain medications and iron therapy.

**Post-Op Brace:**

In special cases, your child’s doctor may recommend wearing a brace for a period of time. This is very individualized and not for every child. Talk to your doctor about whether your child will need a brace after her surgery.
Activity:

- Your child will become tired very easily in the first few weeks after coming home from the hospital.
- Your child may be very uncomfortable and need help getting around.
- Encourage your child to move slowly when getting up. Sudden movements should be avoided. Do not allow your child to bend or twist her back.
- Encourage your child to slowly increase her daily activities. This includes sitting a little longer in a chair each time and walking a little farther each day.
- Encourage frequent rest periods during the day.
- Have your child stand slowly and adjust to any changes in balance before walking.
- Your child’s doctor will review a list of activities that our child can participate in over the next year. (Refer to the “Activity Guidelines Following Spinal Fusion” handout.)
- Non-ambulating children/adolescents with neuromuscular conditions can be positioned in a reclining wheelchair; the head of the chair can be elevated as tolerated. As your child’s pain decreases, the head of the chair can be elevated more. A Seating Clinic appointment should be made 3 months after surgery to make changes to your child’s current chair or to order a new seating system.

School:

Your child may be ready to go back to school 3 - 6 weeks after leaving the hospital. You may arrange for a homebound teacher/tutor until your child returns to school. Before going back to school, your child should be able to sit in a chair comfortably all day and be able to walk longer distances inside your home. Your child will be excused from PE classes for one year.

Dental Prophylaxis:

Your child’s doctor may recommend that your child receive an antibiotic before dental procedures, including routine teeth cleaning. Antibiotics are needed because there is a risk of infection from the germs that can enter the blood after a dental procedure. Your child may be at higher risk for this due to spine implants (rods, hooks, wires, and/or screws). Discuss this with your dentist when you schedule a dental procedure for your child.

Follow-Up:

Your child will return to the Orthopedic Clinic 10 to 14 days after leaving the hospital to check the incision and how well she is doing overall. Your child will return 6 weeks after surgery to check that the spine implants are holding the correction (straightening) of the spine from surgery. Then appointments will be scheduled at 3 months, 6 months, 12 months, 2 years, and 5 years following surgery. Spine x-rays will be done at each of these visits.

Special Instructions:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Call your child’s doctor or nurse at __________________ if you have questions or concerns, or if your child:

- Has a fever greater than 101°F (38.3°C).
- Develops redness, swelling, warmth, tenderness, foul odor or sores around the incision.
- Has been bleeding from the incision.
- Incision breaks open or separates.
- Has sudden, severe back pain.
- Falls hard on his back or side.
- Develops numbness and/or tingling in his arms or legs.
- Is unable to move her arms or legs.
- Has chest pain.
- Has calf or leg pain.
- Have accidents of urine or bowel movements.
- Has vomiting.