Cervical decompression / discectomy: information and exercises

This leaflet aims to help you get back to full fitness as quickly as possible after your operation. Before you leave hospital, a physiotherapist will teach you the appropriate exercises in this leaflet and make sure that you do not have any problems.

After your surgery

A cervical decompression or discectomy is done to remove pressure on the nerves or spinal cord in the neck to relieve pain and altered sensation.

Everybody's symptoms are different. patients with arm pain only usually recover quickly and can often go home within 24 hours of surgery. In patients who have the surgery due to pressure on the spinal cord, the recovery is often slower and the symptoms don't always fully resolve.

You may be fitted with a collar, which should be worn at all times during the first 4-6 weeks.

- **Work** – return to work will depend on the nature of your job. If you have a desk job, you may feel comfortable to return at 6-8 weeks post-op. If you have a heavy manual job, your return to work is likely to be after a minimum of 3 months. **Always check with your surgeon before returning to work.**
- **Driving** – never drive if you have a collar. Once the collar has been removed and you have sufficient range of movement to check blind spots, you may return to driving. If you have had cord compression, resulting in weakness of the legs you must also be able to do an emergency stop before driving.

Day 1 – discharge

- You will be reviewed by the physiotherapist on the ward. Your mobility will be assessed and if required you will be provided with the appropriate walking aid.
- You may mobilise freely round the ward if safe to do so.
- Your may gently begin the exercise programme as shown.
- All the exercises should be repeated 3-5 times per day.
- Once you are mobilising safely and have managed the stairs if you need to do so, you will be discharged home. This is may be within 24 hours of your surgery.

On discharge

- Continue with your exercises as shown.
- Avoid heavy lifting for 3 months or as advised by your surgeon.

- If you have a collar you will be seen after the collar is removed for physiotherapy, if you have no collar you will be seen between 2 and 4 weeks after your surgery.
- You will have a review with your surgeon 6-8 weeks post-op.

Exercises

Nerve mobilisation

These exercises are designed to keep the nerves in the arm moving and preventing them from becoming trapped in scar tissue.

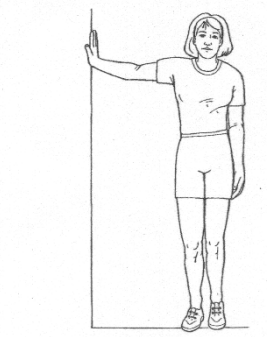
Deep neck flexors

- Within the collar, keeping head upright, pull your chin in.
- Hold the end position and gently nod head downwards 10 times.
- Relax.



Median nerve mobilisation

- Raise your arm to shoulder height.
- Start with the elbow bent then gently straighten it with the hand palm upwards.
- Once the elbow is straight extend the wrist so the fingers point towards the floor.
- Hold for 5 seconds, relax and then repeat 4 more times



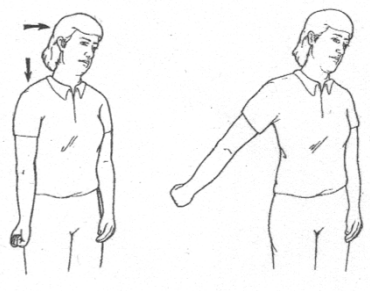
Ulna nerve mobilisation

- Raise your arm to shoulder height.
- Bend the elbow and rotate the forearm so the palm of your hand rests against the side of your head, with your fingers pointing downwards.
- Hold for 5 seconds, relax and then repeat 4 more times.



Radial nerve mobilisation

- Keeping your arm by your side, twist the arm inwards, bend your wrist and then take the arm backwards, angling slightly away from your side.
- Hold for 5 seconds, relax and repeat 4 more times.



If you have **no** soft collar you may also do the following exercises.

Neck flexion

- Gently bend neck forward.
- Do not force to end of range.
- Relax, return to the upright position.
- Repeat 10 times.



Rotation

- Gently rotate your head to one side, do not force to end of range.
- Rotate to the other side and relax.
- Repeat 10 times.



Further information

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To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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