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Anterior Cervical Discectomy Overview

Anterior Cervical Discectomy

Anterior Cervical Discectomy is surgery to remove one or more discs from the neck. The disc is the pad that separates the neck vertebrae; ectomy means to take out. Usually a discectomy is combined with a fusion of the two vertebrae that are separated by the disc. In some cases, this procedure is done without a fusion. A cervical discectomy without a fusion may be suggested for younger patients between 20 and 45 years old who have symptoms due to a herniated disc.

Anterior cervical spinal fusion surgeries are commonly done in conjunction with an anterior cervical discectomy. For many patients, cervical spinal fusion surgery (fusing one vertebra to another) is often done to eliminate motion at a vertebral segment. Decreasing the motion at a painful motion segment should decrease the pain at that segment. Achieving the fusion also serves to maintain adequate space for the decompressed spinal cord and/or nerve roots. The fusion may also prevent the spine from falling into a collapsed deformity (kyphosis).

RISKS:

There are always risks with surgery. You may bleed more than usual or get an infection (in-fek-shun). You could have trouble breathing or get blood clots.

You may have hoarseness after surgery because the surgery is done near a nerve that controls your voice box. Caregivers will watch you closely for these problems. Without surgery, your neck problems may get worse and not better.

Why Do I Need This Procedure?

If you have a herniated disc, this means that the nucleus pulposus – the soft, gel-like center of the disc - has pushed through the annulus fibrosus, the disc's tough, outer ring. Bone spurs, also called osteophytes, can form when the joints of the spine calcify. Anterior Cervical Discectomy w/ Fusion

Pressure placed on nerve roots, ligaments or the spinal cord by a herniated disc or bone spur may cause:

- * Pain in the neck and/or arms
- * Lack of coordination
- * Numbness or weakness in the arms, forearms or fingers.

Pressure placed on the spinal cord as it passes through the cervical spine can be serious, since most of the nerves for rest of the body (e.g., arms, chest, abdomen, legs) must pass through the neck from the brain. A cervical discectomy can ease pressure on the nerves, ultimately providing pain relief.

An anterior cervical discectomy with spinal fusion is typically recommended only after non-surgical treatment methods fail. Your surgeon will take a number of factors into consideration before making

this recommendation, including the condition to be treated, your age, health and lifestyle and your anticipated level of activity following surgery. Please discuss this treatment option thoroughly with your spinal care provider.

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