



## ***Post-Operative Instructions After Lumbar Spine Surgery***

We want to make this experience as pleasant as possible for you and your family. If you have any questions before or after your surgery, please contact our office at 303-783-1300.

### ***Post-Op Pain***

It is not unusual to experience the following symptoms in the first few weeks after surgery:

1. Pain in and around the incision
2. Some persistent leg pain
3. Numbness or tingling of the leg or foot
4. Mild swelling or redness at the incision
5. Muscle tightness or spasm of the back or leg
6. Numbness in the hip area or pulling feeling in buttocks or groin area if a bone graft was taken from the hip
7. Pain on moving from bed to chair or standing position. It is not unusual to be uncomfortable during the first few days following surgery, and especially at night. This will improve steadily.

### ***Pain Medication***

With regard to pain medicine, you will be given a prescription when you are discharged. You may also get a prescription for a muscle relaxant. Take them as needed and directed. No prescription refills will be called in at night or on weekends.

Do not begin taking Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs or NSAIDs ( Advil, Motrin, Ibuprofen, Nuprin, Alleve, Celebrex, Bextra, etc.) until approximately 12 weeks post op .

You may be prescribed Decadron (a steroid) to take after you are home from the hospital. Take this prescription as directed. You must take the entire prescription. Decadron may cause you to feel nervous or jittery. It may also cause difficulty sleeping. These symptoms will improve once you have finished your prescription.

## ***Incision Care***

There are either staples, sutures or paper band aids (steri-strips) holding the incision closed.

1. Change the dressing daily for 3 days with 4x4 gauze and tape, or when the dressing is soiled. You should **leave steri strips in place** and cover with an oversized Band-Aid or gauze sponges and tape. Persistent or purulent drainage should be reported to our office.
2. You may shower 48 hours after surgery. Water will not hurt the incision but do not tub bathe or soak the wound. Keep the dressing clean and dry.
3. Do not apply ointments or solutions to the incision. Mild soap and water is OK.
4. If you notice a small clear suture at the end of the incision, do not remove it. It will either dissolve or be removed in the office.
5. If you develop blisters, redness, or irritation from the tape, discontinue its use.

## ***Do's and Don'ts***

You should think of the first week after surgery as an extension of your hospital stay. In general, if any activity increases discomfort, don't do it. It will get easier each day. Your first post-op visit will be scheduled 10-14 days after surgery with our Assistants. You will see your surgeon on your second post op visit. An x-ray will be ordered on the days of your first and second post-op visits if you have had a lumbar fusion.

1. Do not use time at home as an excuse to do housework.
2. Do not remain confined to bed during the day. Walk as much as you comfortably can. You may climb stairs. If you sit or stand for more than 20-30 minutes, you should get up and walk to avoid getting stiff.
3. Following a fusion, you will wear a brace for approximately 12 weeks after your surgery. Following a laminotomy, foraminotomy or laminectomy or discectomy you will wear a brace for approximately 4 weeks. This may vary on a case to case basis. You must wear your brace at all times, with the exception of showering.
4. Avoid exaggerated bending or twisting or lifting more than 10 lbs.
5. No exercise program until you are released by your physician to do so.
6. Sexual activity is permitted whenever comfort permits.
7. You may ride in a car as a passenger. Do not ride for more than an hour without getting out and walking for a few minutes. You may drive after your first post-op visit if you feel comfortable.
8. Decisions regarding returning to work and physical therapy needs will be made on an individual basis by our medical staff.

9. Hot tubs – Patients who have had a fusion should not use a hot tub for at least 3 months post op. If you have had a laminectomy or micro-discectomy and do not have any surgical implants or bone graft you may use a hot tub at 6 weeks post op.

10. The pain medication and anesthesia can cause problems with constipation. Start a stool softener daily, increase fluids and walk as tolerated to help with constipation. It is ok to use an over the counter suppository (such as Dulcolax) or an oral laxative (such as Dulcolax tabs or Milk of Magnesia), as needed, if you have had no bowel movement by 3 days after your surgery.

11. Do not schedule dental work for two weeks prior to your surgery or for two weeks following your surgery.

12. It is ok to sleep on your side, back, or in a reclining position

13. Implant cards are available upon request if you have had a lumbar fusion. This may be required by your airlines before they allow you to clear security.

## ***Calling the Office***

We are here to help you. Please call with any questions. Our Medical assistant or Physician's assistant will call you during the first week after discharge from the hospital to check on your progress. Notify the office if your phone number differs from the one you gave us at your initial visit. **Call the office at 303-783-1300 if any of the following occur:**

1. Sustained fever greater than 101.5 degrees Fahrenheit by mouth that does not respond to a dose of two tablets of Tylenol. (Do not take Tylenol if you have any contraindications or allergies to Tylenol.)
2. Drainage from the incision. (spotty drainage may be normal for the first few days)
3. Incision is very red or warm to the touch.
4. Leg or back pain or swelling in excess of your pre-operative pain.

## ***Calling 911***

Please call 911 immediately if any of the following occur:

1. Difficulty breathing, shortness of breath or pain with breathing
2. Chest pain
3. Leg pain – specifically calf tightness or swelling
4. Bowel or Bladder loss