

LUMBAR SURGERY POST OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

After lumbar surgery of any kind it is very important for the patient to return back to a normal level of activity. We encourage you to get out and walk as much as possible. We like to see patients actively walking outside for 30 minutes a day at a minimum. As the healing process continues the duration of time should also increase. After any lumbar surgery a patient is expected to have lumbar back pain however with activity that will improve. We encourage patients to avoid bending forward at the waist and to use proper body mechanics when lifting any objects using the knees to squat down, lift the object, and then carry it close to the body. After lumbar surgery we limit lifting to 10 pounds the first week. Once you have been re-evaluated in the office the lifting limit will increase to 20 pounds.

Post operatively the patients will wake up in the recovery room. You are usually there for about 45 minutes to an hour. At that point you will be moved either to our same day area or to the floor where the staff will get you up and moving. With most lumbar procedures once you are active and your pain is controlled you be discharged to home.

Most patients will have a dressing on their back. We ask that the dressing be changed on a daily basis until it is dry. Once the drainage has stopped there is no reason to further cover the wound as this leads to skin breakdown.

We allow patients to start showering the day after surgery. It is fine for water to run over the incision area. For patients who have a lumbar drain in place we advise you to keep that area dry when showering. Once the drain is removed you can resume showering as normal.

If a lumbar fusion is performed you will be fitted with a lumbar back brace to wear post operatively. We advise patients to wear the brace when up and active and when walking more than 5 minutes. You do not have to wear the brace in the car, while sitting or while laying down. Some patients will find comfort wearing the brace when in a sitting position and that is acceptable.

You will be prescribed pain medication to take post operatively as well as Flexeril which is a muscle relaxant medication that we advise you to take at night to help with rest.

Most patients have a difficult time finding a position of comfort after back surgery when trying to lay down to rest. We allow you to lay on your side or back while sleeping but we do ask you to avoid sleeping on your stomach. Some patients prefer to sleep in a recliner post operatively and that is acceptable until they can lay flat in the bed.

Patients are allowed to gently twist and turn post operatively. This will not harm you as far as the surgical procedure.

You will be able to drive once you are off pain medication and feel that you have good control of your lower extremities.

You will follow-up in the office typically between 7 and 10 days post operatively. Any post operative x-rays will be explained to you and the surgery will be reviewed in detail. We will always be happy to answer any questions in the post operative phase.

Please call the office if you have any questions or concerns post operatively.

POST OPERATIVE CERVICAL SURGERY INSTRUCTIONS

Today you are having an anterior cervical discectomy and fusion or other cervical surgery. Most cervical surgeries take about an hour to an hour and a half total time. Post operatively you will wake up in the recovery room staying for about 45 minutes to an hour. Then you will either go to our same day area or to the floor where the staff will get you up and moving.

If you have more than one level performed we will often use a drain which you will go home with from the hospital. The nursing staff will teach you drain care and will make arrangements for you to come to the office for the drain to be removed. The drain is important post operatively, as it will help you with pain control and also help with swallowing.

Post operatively you should expect to have some issues with neck pain both at the surgery site and the back of your neck. You will also have some swallowing difficulties. The swallowing difficulties are normal and usually resolve within 2 to 3 weeks time after surgery. We advise patients to ice their neck frequently post operatively. You cannot use ice too much but 15 minutes every 2 hours at the surgery site as well as the back of the neck is expected. This will cut down on your post operative pain and help with swallowing and decrease any swelling. Swallowing is difficult after many of the surgical procedures, and we advise you to follow a soft diet including but not limited to yogurt, pudding, scrambled eggs, mashed potatoes, and avoid harder foods such as chips, fried foods or steak. We also advise patients to have on hand Ensure or Boost shakes as that gives good nutrition in a liquid form. Other methods to help with swallowing difficulty would include the use of chloraseptic spray especially right before a meal. If there is a lot of upper airway congestion then the use of Mucinex every 12 hours over the counter is also helpful.

We allow patients to shower starting the day after surgery. If you have a drain in place we do not like the shower to spray directly on the drain. When you finish your shower you should then pat the area dry and once it is completely dry apply a new dressing.

Change the dressing on a daily basis for 3 post operative days. Then after that you can leave the wound open to air.

We provide all patients with a soft cervical collar. For patients who have a single level fusion the cervical collar can be worn for comfort at their discretion. It is not mandatory. For patients that have 2 or more levels done in the cervical spine we generally provide an Aspen collar. We ask that you place the Aspen collar on your neck upon waking in the morning and wear it throughout the day. You can remove the Aspen collar to shower, eat, and when you are icing your neck. Many patients like to wear the soft collar at night when they rest as it gives them some comfort and support of the head and neck but that is not absolutely necessary.

We advise patients to get back to your normal state of health and activity as quickly as possible after surgery. We are basically doing surgery on your neck, not your arms or your legs so you should be using them as much as you possibly can. In general you can raise your arms above your head to work on some stretching exercises as well as range of motion of your shoulders. The more you can move the upper body extremities the less tension and muscle spasms you will have in the back of your neck. As you return to your normal activities your pain level will drop dramatically.

Patients usually followup in the office between 7 and 10 days post operatively for recheck of your neck and x-rays. At that point we will go over the x-rays with you in detail, explain the procedure, and discuss further care. Patients often ask when they can drive post operatively. We allow driving once you are off of pain medication. If you have been given a hard cervical collar it is illegal to drive in the collar. We advise you to remove the collar, drive, and then reapply the collar.

Lifting precautions are given after surgery because strain increases the posterior neck pain. We limit lifting to 10 pounds for the first week and then 20 pounds thereafter until instructed otherwise.

We typically will send you home from the hospital with 2 different medications. Flexeril is the typical muscle spasm drug of choice which you will take a night before you go to bed to help with rest. We also will prescribe post operative pain medication and will go over the dosing of that medication with you while in the hospital. You are advised to drink plenty of fluids,

We will typically go over all these instructions with you in the hospital both before and after surgery. We will be happy to answer any of your questions. If you have any issues in the post operative phase call the main office phone number and one of our staff will return your call and answer any questions.