



Neurosurgical Associates of Southwestern CT

BRAIN & SPINE SPECIALISTS

Post-Operative Instructions Lumbar Surgery

The following is a list of instructions for your convalescence, following your lumbar surgery. This includes lumbar microdiscectomies and lumbar laminectomies. These are general instructions to be used as guidelines. They may be modified for an individual patient.

1. The surgical procedure you had was performed in conjunction with another surgeon or physician assistant. Post-operative questions can be addressed with either surgeon. This team approach leads to better patient care and outcome.
2. No lifting, pushing or pulling of objects greater than 10-15 pounds and no strenuous activity.
3. When bending to lift an object off the floor, bend at the knees and NOT at the waist.
4. Do not twist the spine in any way.
5. In order to avoid twisting your spine in bed at night, use a pillow between your legs and pillows at your sides to avoid rolling over onto your stomach.
6. Use a straight back chair or a fairly rigid recliner for sitting, preferably something with arms. Do not use low or soft cushioned chairs for sitting, as they offer very little support. Use a lumbar roll (low back support cushion) when sitting.
7. In the first 10 days to 2 weeks, do not sit more than 30 minutes at any one time. Over the next 6 weeks gradually increase the duration and frequency that is comfortable for you.
8. No back exercises will be done in the first 3-4 weeks. As you progress it will be determined by your surgeon when you can start an exercise program or physiotherapy.
9. Your surgeon will tell you when you may return to work. It usually occurs between the 3rd and 4th week with increasing work hours.
10. Walking is the best activity to improve your overall fitness and endurance. This is started very early on following your surgery. You can begin with short trips and increase your time and distance. Begin with 10 minutes and slowly progress to walking 20-30 minutes 3-4 times a day.
11. You may climb stairs from the very beginning, but start slowly and use the handrail. It is advisable the first day or two, to have someone climb the stairs with you to ensure stability and that you are comfortable.

12. In most cases, dissolvable sutures have been used for your incision. The incision is covered with Steri-strips and gauze dressing that protects the wound. The dressing is usually a water resistant dressing. You may shower at home after surgery. The water resistant dressing will keep the wound dry. Pat area dry with a towel. Before you are discharged from the hospital the nurse will provide you with further instructions regarding the care of your wound. Do not submerge in water for at least 3 weeks after surgery.
13. If staples or non-dissolvable sutures are used, you will need to be seen at our office within 10-14 days from surgery to have them removed. Please call the office to make an appointment.
14. You are not to drive for the first 10 days to 2 weeks following surgery. You can ride in a car for short distances up to 20 minutes after the first week. Generally you can drive to the office for your first post-operative visit. Prolonged sitting in a car may exacerbate back or leg symptoms that were present pre-operatively.
15. You should rest between activities. You will tire more easily for the first few months post-operatively. It can take a while for your energy level to return to normal. It is generally a good idea to get up every morning, bathe, get dressed and resume a normal routine.
16. Medications may include pain relievers and analgesics to control pain, although they may cause drowsiness and constipation. They may also be habit forming and you may want to consider the amount of pain medication you are taking. You may also consider taking multivitamins with iron on a daily basis for a few weeks post-operatively.
17. Constipation is a common side effect of some pain medications so it is important to drink plenty of liquids and eat a diet high in fiber. You may need to take a stool softener for a short time while taking pain medication, but avoid strong laxatives. Consider Milk of Magnesia, Metamucil, Fibercon, Citrucel or other mild laxatives.
18. Medications may include pain relievers and analgesics to control pain, although they may cause drowsiness and constipation. They may also be habit forming and you may want to consider the amount of pain medication you are taking. You may also consider taking multivitamins with iron on a daily basis for a few weeks post-operatively.
19. Report any increase in post-operative pain, fever, chills, drainage, swelling of the wound or any redness of the wound immediately to our office. If there is drainage, note the color, amount and consistency. Also call us if you are having headaches. Do not hesitate to call if you have any questions.
20. Each individual situation is different and therefore requires individualized attention. Feel free to ask questions during your office visits. Write down your questions before you come into the office so you don't forget anything!