

Lumbar Fusion Discharge Instructions

Follow-up: If you were not already given an appointment for follow-up, call to schedule an appointment with your surgeon in _____ days or _____ weeks.

- ⊖ You have sutures or staples that need to be removed.
- ⊖ Your sutures are absorbable and do not need to be removed.
- ⊖ Please remove Steri-Strips in _____ days.

Dressing: You may remove your dressing _____ days after surgery. You may shower at this point but do not immerse incision site in water, (i.e. pool, Jacuzzi, or bath). Until your follow-up visit it is imperative you maintain good personal hygiene.

- ⊖ You will be given an appointment with the wound center, please check with them prior to discharge.

Diet:

- You may resume your pre-operative diet.
- Advance your diet slowly, especially if you are still experiencing some nausea from the anesthesia.
- If you are diabetic, keep your blood sugar as normal as possible as diabetics have a significantly greater chance of getting a wound infection following surgery. Call your **family physician** if you are having trouble controlling your blood sugar.

Return to Work:

- ⊖ You may return to light work not involving excessive bending or lifting (no greater than 8 pounds or the weight of a gallon of milk) in 1 to 3 weeks.
- ⊖ Please call the office to check with your surgeon prior to returning to work.

You may want to consider limiting work to part time at first. Heavy lifting of greater than 25 pounds should be avoided until the 10 to 12 week mark.

Activity:

- You should be as active as possible but **listen to what your body is telling you. Use good judgment and common sense.**
- You may need to rest for an hour or two each day the first week.
- You may ride in a car but you should not drive a car or heavy machinery for _____ days.
- Walking is an excellent exercise and you may walk outside if weather permits. Increase the distance you walk every day if possible but listen to what your body is telling you.
- You may climb stairs. Stairs will not injure your back.
- Sexual relations are permissible one week after surgery.
- You may resume sports in 2 to 3 months. Please check with your surgeon first. Start ALL activities slowly and begin with stretching or warm-up exercises.
- Avoid pulling, pushing, or lifting unduly heavy objects, especially in awkward positions.
- Exercises will be necessary on a long term basis. You may need Physical Therapy (PT); please check with your physician at your first post-op visit about Therapy.

- You may have PT arranged to begin immediately after discharge, please check with your surgeon.

Medications:

- Resume your previous medications but check with your surgeon before resuming any blood thinners (i.e. Plavix, Aspirin, Coumadin, Pradaxa, etc.).
- Please take your pain medicine only as prescribed.
- Your doctor will prescribe medication for pain and/or possible muscle spasm after your discharge.
- Narcotic pain medication may produce constipation. You may need a stool softener and these may be purchased over the counter (i.e. Miralax, Senekot X, or Peri-colace).

What to Expect:

- You may have some post op back or leg discomfort.
- It is expected that your leg pain will be much improved but may linger depending on the length of time the symptoms were present.

Call your surgeon if:

- You notice fever or chills and have a temperature of over 101 degrees.
- Your incision turns red and or starts to drain more than 10 days from your surgery.
- Your pain worsens 2 to 3 weeks after the surgery.
- Tenderness or swelling in one or both calves.
- Shortness of breath or chest pain.
- You develop weakness in one or both of your legs.
- Return of your pain worse than it was before surgery.
- Cloudy or foul smelling drainage.
- Drainage that continues beyond 4 to 5 days.
- You have not urinated more than 12 hours after discharge.

24 Hour Office Phone Number: 301.797.9240

Office Website: www.pnsi.org

Do Not Smoke: Smoking has been shown to slow the healing process and increase your chance of infection. It can also limit the fusion process if you've had a fusion or bone graft. If you need help quitting you can call the Washington County Health Department at 240.420.1796 and ask about their stop smoking classes. Your primary care doctor can also help with medications or patches.