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## Lumbar Fusion Surgery: Post-Operative Instructions

### Incision Care

- Usually your stitches are beneath the surface of your skin. They will be absorbed into your body as you heal. They will be reinforced with steri-strips (sterile strips of tape) applied directly to the skin surface.
- Without steri-strips, the dressing is a clear adhesive. It should start to peel off in a week or two.
- Keep incision dry for one week following surgery.
- You may shower, but no tub baths.
- You should change the outer dressing daily to keep the incision clean and dry. You may remove the outer dressing in one week.
- If external sutures closed the incision, keep dry until sutures are removed. Change dressing daily for one week, then leave open to air.

### Pain

You may still have some pain, numbness or tingling in your back, hips or legs. This should decrease gradually as the nerves heal. An ice pack may be used on the incision to reduce swelling and pain.

### Brace Instructions

- You must wear your brace at all times when out of bed, if given a brace.
- You must take it off to shower.
- Your physician will determine when you are ready to wean out of your brace, but you are usually wearing the brace for 8 to 12 weeks.

### Call Our Office

If you...

- Feel severe pain, weakness or numbness in your leg(s).
- Notice excessive swelling or increased redness around your incision. from incision.
- If any clear fluid drainage comes from the wound.
- Have a fever of 101 degrees or greater.
- Have a new problem controlling your bladder or bowel.

### Medication

- If you were given a Medrol dosepak (steroid/anti-inflammatory medication) you may notice a slight increase in the above symptoms, as the Medrol dosepak decreases. This is due to swelling and irritation around the nerve and will improve as you heal. Complete the full course of Medrol according to instructions on the package.
- You will be given a prescription for pain medication when you are discharged from the hospital. Take as directed on the prescription. **Do not drink alcoholic beverages while taking this medication.**
- You may be given a prescription for muscle relaxants (to reduce spasms or tightness in your back). This medication may make you drowsy. **Do not drink alcoholic beverages while on this medication.**
- Medications will be refilled during normal business hours (8:30 am – 5:00 pm, M-Th, 9:30 am – noon Fri), as the physician on call cannot renew prescriptions.
- Do not take anti-inflammatory medication for six months following surgery (such as Ibuprofen, Aleve, Celebrex, etc.) These medications can impair the healing process.

## Activity

### First Week:

- Avoid bending or twisting from the waist.
- Do not lift over 5 pounds until released to do so.
- Limit auto travel. Passenger only. No driving.
- Walk around the house for first couple of days after surgery. Then you may begin to walk outside for short periods 1 to 2 blocks per day. Do not overdo it.
- Avoid house and yard work. You may cook but do not lift more than 5 pounds until released to do so.
- You may shower, but no tub baths.
- To sleep you may lie on your back or side, but not on your abdomen.
- Take a nap or at least rest in the morning and again in the afternoon.

### Second Week:

- Increase walking distance as tolerated, working up to 1 mile per day.
- Take a nap or at least rest in the morning and again in the afternoon.
- Continue to avoid house and yard work.
- You may begin driving short distances, no more than 30 minutes. Make certain your seat, mirrors and restraints are properly adjusted.
- Continue bending, twisting and lifting restrictions.

### Third Week:

- Increase walking distance as tolerated.
- You may be up and about as tolerated.
- Begin light housework. Do not sweep or vacuum. Stop for frequent breaks. Use good body mechanics.
- Continue bending, twisting, and lifting restrictions.

## Follow-Up Appointment

Your first post-op appointment should be 2 weeks from your surgery for skin staple removal. Please call early to get a convenient appointment time. Your next appointment will be 4 weeks later. You will be scheduled for an x-ray prior to your 6-week appointment.

## Return to Work

Return to work varies with the type of occupation and will be discussed at your follow-up appointment.