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FAQ for Lumbar Fusion

Should I alter my diet for surgery?

Recommended high fiber diet starting three days before surgery and in the postoperative period since constipation is common. A healthy option is flax powder or seeds sprinkled on food or MiraLAX.

What activity expectations should I have after lumbar disc surgery?

Recommend avoidance of heavy lifting or twisting for at least 8 to 12 weeks after surgery since most disc herniation reoccurs during that period. A reminder that a gallon of milk weighs 8 pounds – it is recommended restricting lifting to one or 2 gallons of milk as tolerated.

When will I return to normal activity after lumbar disc surgery?

You should feel significant improvement from sciatic leg pain pretty quickly after surgery. However, as far as returning to full activity, we recommend waiting three months. Avoid sweating for the first 3 weeks after surgery to help prevent infection.

After lumbar disc surgery, may I lay in bed in any position?

Yes, you can lay on your side, back, or stomach.

When will I be off my pain medication after lumbar disc surgery?

Most patients are off their pain medication withing a week or two.

How do I care for my lumbar incision?

Because we use Dermabond and our sutures are under the skin, sutures or staples will not need to be removed. Simply place a new Tegaderm and gauze dressing on the incision every day daily for 10 straight days and then it may be undressed. These dressings are waterproof.

What can I do to improve fusion rates on a lumbar fusion surgery?

First and foremost, avoid smoking, secondly, avoid taking NSAIDs, medications which include Ibuprofen (Motrin), Aspirin, Excedrin, Meloxicam (Mobic), and Naproxen (Aleve). Your insurance company may approve a bone growth stimulator, which also enhances fusion rates.

Do I need to wear my lumbar brace in bed after fusion surgery?

No, you do not. Neither is it required when sitting. Only necessary when walking, as a precaution.