



Jason Taub, M.D.

Lumbar Fusion: Post-Operative Instructions

Incision Care

- Usually, your stitches are beneath the surface of the skin. They will be absorbed into your body as you heal. They are covered by Dermabond, a skin glue that protects your incision. The glue will start to flake off around 2 weeks after surgery.
- You may shower with a waterproof dressing for the first 14 days but no tub baths. Keep the incision dry and change the dressing at least once daily. After 14 days you can leave the incision open to air and shower without it covered. You'll be approved to start soaking/swimming 3-4 weeks after surgery if the incisions have healed well.
- If you need more dressings than what was supplied by the hospital, you can look for a Tegaderm+pad at a medical supply pharmacy or just select any waterproof dressing from your pharmacy.
- If you had a drain, the drain site may leak fluid for a day or two, then it should dry and scab over. If the drainage does not stop/slow over the first few days please notify the office.

Lumbar Brace

- Wear the brace when you are up and moving around. You may take it off for sleeping or sitting. Do try to wear it when you are in the car but if too uncomfortable you may loosen or remove it.
- It is important to be compliant with the brace until you are fused and healed. Fusion typically takes a few months and will be determined on your follow up x-rays.

Pain

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

Medication

- You will be given a prescription for pain medicine when you are discharged from the hospital. Take as needed and as directed on the prescription.
- Pain pills are constipating. Drink plenty of non-caffeine fluids to stay hydrated. Take MiraLax and/or stool softeners (1-2 per day) while on pain pills. If you have not had a bowel movement for 3 days, try Milk of Magnesia over the counter and repeat it in 6 hours if ineffective. You may also try a glycerin or dulcolax suppository. If still no bowel movement by day 4 or 5, take 1 bottle of Magnesium Citrate over-the-counter.
- You may have been given a prescription for muscle relaxants (to reduce spasms or tightness in your back). This medication may make you drowsy.
- **Do not drive, operate machinery or drink alcoholic beverages while taking pain pills or muscle relaxers.**
- DO NOT take anti-inflammatory medication after surgery for several months or until cleared by your doctor (such as ibuprofen, Aleve, Celebrex, Naproxen, meloxicam). NSAIDs can impair or slow bone healing/fusion.
- Medications will be refilled during normal business hours (8:30 am – 5:00 pm, Mon – Thurs and 8:30 am – 12:30 pm Fri) as the physician on call cannot renew prescriptions. Notify the office 24 hours in advance for refills.



Jason Taub, M.D.

Lumbar Fusion: Post-Operative Instructions (cont.)

Activity

First Week:

- Limit auto travel. Passenger only, no driving.
- Avoid significant bending or twisting.
- Limit lifting to 10 pounds until approved by the doctor to increase it.
- Walk in your house as tolerated. Get your legs moving with short walks several times each day. Do not lay around in bed all day but do not overdo it!
- You may climb stairs as tolerated. Use the hand rail, take one at a time.
- If you sit longer than 30-60 minutes at a time your back may feel very stiff, so avoid prolonged sitting.
- Avoid house and yard work. You may cook but do not lift more than 10 pounds.
- No sexual activity.
- Take a nap or at least rest in the morning and again in the afternoon.
- You may lie on your back or your side, really any position that is comfortable to sleep.

Second Week:

- Start short walks outside, 1 to 2 blocks, several times a day. You may increase this as tolerated. Do not overdo it! Do not get hot and sweaty for the first two weeks as sweat may infect the incision(s).
- No driving. Passenger only.

Third Week:

- You may be up and about, as tolerated.
- Increase walking distance as tolerated.
- Begin light housework. Stop for frequent breaks. Use good body mechanics. Still avoid excessive twisting/bending. Ensure your brace is on when your back is vulnerable.
- You may now drive if you feel safe and comfortable behind the wheel and if you are off prescription pain medication.

Return to Work

Return to work varies with the type of occupation and will be discussed at your follow-up appointment. Most patients can resume work from home/computer work in 3 weeks and back to the office on light duty (no heavy lifting) at 4-6 weeks.



Jason Taub, M.D.

Lumbar Fusion: Post-Operative Instructions (cont.)

Other

- Use the incentive spirometer (plastic breathing device) from the hospital to take deep breaths several times per day the first week or two home.
- You do not need to keep wearing compression socks after hospital discharge but keep your legs moving to help prevent blood clots.
- We will attempt to get approval from your insurance company for a bone growth stimulator (painless device that you wear 30 minutes per day to promote bone fusion). This can be discussed at your first post operative visit.
- You will see a physical therapist while you are in the hospital. Not all patients need physical therapy after the hospital, but we will prescribe it when needed or requested. It will usually benefit patients who are returning to a very physical job or those who had baseline gait limitation or weakness before surgery. This can be discussed at your first post operative visit.
- You can resume sexual activity as tolerated after you are a month out from surgery.
- 5-6 weeks out from surgery you can increase low impact exercise (walking, stationary bike, elliptical with no significant incline or resistance, swimming). You may use light weight dumbbells at higher repetitions if desired (15 lbs or less). Light stretching is okay. Avoid crunches or anything that stresses your back.

Call Our Office

If you ...

- Feel severe pain, new weakness or numbness in your leg(s) or arm(s).
- Notice excessive drainage, pus drainage, swelling, or increased redness around your incision.
- Have a fever of 101.5°F or greater.
- Have a new problem controlling your bladder or bowel.
- Have difficulty breathing or trouble swallowing.

Follow-Up Appointment

Your first post-op appointment should be 2-3 weeks following your discharge from hospital. Please call early to get a convenient time. You will be scheduled for an x-ray prior to your appointment.

Contact Number

Office: 214-750-3646