

LUMBAR SPINE FUSION POST-OP & HOME DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS

Mark Santman, MD / Rudi Dimas, PA-C

WOUND CARE:

- A sterile surgical glue (Dermabond) was placed over the incision (under your bandage) at the time of surgery. This surgical glue can be removed after the 1st post-operative appointment, which is scheduled 2 weeks after surgery.
- Keep the surgical incision site clean and dry
- Keep the site covered with a dry gauze pad/dressing and medical paper tape.
- Change your dressing daily. Please visit the local drug store to buy any medical supplies needed for daily dressing changes (i.e. sterile gauze pads and paper tape).
- You may shower the day after you go home. Remove the dressing, shower, pat the area dry, and reapply a new dry sterile dressing. Do not scrub the blue surgical glue (Dermabond) placed over your surgical incision.
- Avoid using any topical creams, ointments or lotions for the first 2 weeks.
- Do not soak the incision in water such as in a bath, hot tub or swimming pool for 6 weeks after surgery. If you have any drainage from the surgical incision, please call our office immediately.
- Apply ice packs to the back four times a day for 20 minutes to help decrease swelling after surgery.

MEDICATIONS:

- A prescription for pain medication will be sent electronically to your pharmacy upon discharge from the hospital.
- If you need a refill after surgery, call the office at (512) 509-0235 between 8am – 4pm, Monday thru Thursday. It may take 24 hours before prescription can be refilled.
- Medication refills are not normally given after-hours or on the weekends.
- Take all medications as prescribed.
- Call the office or ask the pharmacist any questions about medications, or if you are unable to take the prescribed medications as directed.
- DO NOT drink alcohol or drive a motor vehicle while taking pain medications.
- Pain medications cause constipation. We recommend regular use of over-the-counter stool softeners (Colace or Surfak) on a daily basis while taking any pain medications.
- DO NOT take Ibuprofen, Aleve, Mobic or any NSAID following your spine surgery. These medications interfere with fusions and slow bone healing.
- If you were taking a blood thinner (i.e. Coumadin, Warfarin, Plavix, etc.) before surgery, you can resume that medication 5 days after surgery.
- You may re start your baby Aspirin the day after you go home.
- You may substitute Tylenol (Acetaminophen) for your pain medication; however, no more the 4,000 milligrams in 24 hours because it can cause liver damage. Please note that most narcotic pain medications (i.e. Norco, Vicodin, Percocet, etc.) have Acetaminophen combined with them.

DIET:

- You may return to your normal diet after discharge from the hospital.
- A sore throat is common after intubation and general anesthesia.
- Drink plenty of fluids after surgery.
- Take an over-the-counter stool softener (i.e. Surfak or Colace) daily with full glass of water. A laxative (i.e. Milk of Magnesia or Dulcolax) may be needed after surgery for constipation due to the pain medications.

ACTIVITY:

- Walk daily. Walking is your physical therapy for the first 6 - 12 weeks after surgery; start slowly and increase distance and frequency of walks as tolerated.
- Physical therapy will be ordered at either your 6 or 12 week post-operative appointment if needed.
- Use a walker or cane for balance, especially if you feel unsteady for the first few weeks.
- Wear the back brace when out of bed walking or sitting up in a chair as directed.
- Continue to use your incentive spirometer (breathing machine) at home every hour while awake. Practice deep breathing exercises daily.
- We recommend you do not return to work or travel outside of the local area until after your first post-operative appointment, which will be scheduled 2 weeks after surgery.

RESTRICTIONS:

- No lifting, pushing or pulling > 10 lbs. (a gallon of milk is approximately 10 lbs.).
- Avoid repetitive bending or twisting at the waist.
- Avoid strenuous activities or vigorous pounding (i.e. heavy house chores, yard work, running, boating, etc.).
- Avoid sitting in a recliner for long periods of time because it will increase swelling in the lower lumbar region.
- Avoid spending all day in bed. Take short naps during the day if needed.
- No driving after surgery if taking pain medications. We will discuss driving restrictions and recommendations at your 1st post op appointment.
- DO NOT use tobacco products for at least 6 months after a lumbar spine fusion. Even small amounts of tobacco use can interfere with a fusion and slow down bone healing.

FOLLOW-UP:

- 1st appointment will be in office in 2 weeks after surgery with PA Rudi Dimas.
- 2nd appointment will be in office 6 weeks after surgery with Dr. Mark Santman.
- X-rays will be performed at the 2nd post-operative appointment for a lumbar spine fusion. Please show up 30 minutes before your scheduled appointment time.
- For any questions or concerns, please call the Nurse Line for the Orthopedic Spine Surgery Department at (512) 509-0235.

CALL THE OFFICE:

- Signs of infection such as: fever > 101 degrees, chills and night sweats.
- Drainage or bleeding from the surgical incision.
- Redness or heat around surgical incision.
- Increasing back or leg pain not controlled with prescribed pain medications.
- Difficulty with urination or bowel movements.
- Neurological deterioration to include new leg pain or weakness.

GO TO EMERGENCY ROOM FOR THE FOLLOWING:

- Nausea and vomiting.
- Abdomen pain.
- Respiratory distress or difficulty breathing.
- Chest pain.
- Severe headaches.
- Leg swelling, pain or signs of a blood clot.