



Posterior Lumbar Interbody Fusion Post-operative Instructions

Successful surgery depends not only on the success of the procedure, but also on your cooperation and compliance during the post-operative period. To assist you in this process, below are instructions and guidelines to follow during your recovery period. Our staff is here to assist all your post-operative needs. If you have any questions or problems please contact our office at (850) 934-7545.

Wound

Proper care of the incision helps to prevent infection.

- ❖ You will have skin glue and a proxy strip covering the incision site. **PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE THE DRESSING.** It will come off on its own within 3 to 4 weeks after surgery. The small paper tapes on your incision will be removed in the office at your post-op visit or will be allowed to fall off themselves.
- ❖ If you had bone harvested for a graft, there may be swelling and numbness at the site. These are normal. Use ice packs to help the swelling. The numbness will gradually fade over several months. There could be some minor residual numbness.
- ❖ Keep the incision dry for 48 hours after surgery.
- ❖ You may SHOWER and get the incision wet after 48 hours. Avoid scrubbing your incision site. Do NOT soak the incision; avoid baths, hot tubs and swimming for 1 month after surgery.
- ❖ Check the incision daily for redness, swelling or drainage. Some redness and swelling is normal. It is normal for the incision site to itch, but avoid scratching.
- ❖ A small amount of clear or slightly blood tinged drainage from the incision is normal. Contact us if drainage persists for more than 2 days or if you have redness or swelling around the incision.
- ❖ Do not wash directly over the incision. Wash around the incision gently with soap and water and then let air dry. If you have fevers or chills, take your temperature with a thermometer. If you have a temperature of 100.5 degrees or higher lasting longer than 4 hours, contact our office.
- ❖ Do not use any creams, lotions, ointments, or alcohol near or on the incision.
- ❖ It is normal for the incision site to itch, but avoid scratching.

Brace

- ❖ You will be given a lumbar brace to wear after surgery. You should wear the when you are out of bed. You will be required to wear the brace for about 4 weeks as determined in your follow-up visit.
- ❖ The brace does not need to be worn when getting up at night to use the restroom.
- ❖ Using a cotton tee shirt that is washed daily, should be worn underneath the brace. The brace should be wiped with alcohol at least every third or fourth day. It is not uncommon for the brace to grow a fungus due to the perspiration. If the brace loosens, through either weight reduction, which is common in the postoperative course, or there is malfunctioning of the strap that would interfere with the effectiveness of the brace, then brace adjustments can be made by the provider of the brace or our office.

Pain Relief

During the healing phase, it is common to have some pain, numbness, tingling, and weakness in your legs. If you have an increase in pain once you return home, try these options to decrease the pain:

- ❖ Ice the back for 15-20 minutes each hour for 4 hours. Do not put the ice directly on the skin. Use a pre-made ice pack or put ice in a plastic bag then wrap the ice pack or bag in a towel before you use it.
- ❖ Reduce your activity for the next 24 hours (i.e. walking).
- ❖ You will be discharged with prescription medication for your surgical pain. All refills on prescriptions must be picked up in our office. We require a 72 hour notice Monday thru Friday for a refill to be processed.
- ❖ Remember, **ABSOLUTELY NO MEDICATION REFILLS WILL BE PROCESSED ON THE WEEKEND.** Please plan accordingly.
- ❖ Tylenol (acetaminophen): You may take up to 4000 milligrams per day. Percocet and Norco also contain Tylenol. If you have liver disease, do not take Tylenol without checking with us first.
- ❖ Do not take Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) (i.e., Ibuprofen, Motrin, Advil, Aleve, Celebrex, etc.) for 3 months. These medicines could delay bone healing.
- ❖ The clinical staff will be working with you to balance pain medicine, pain management, and activity. The goal is to taper you off of your pain medicine by 6 weeks after surgery.

Exercise

- ❖ Walking is the best "exercise" after surgery and you need to walk DAILY. You should not engage in any other exercise until instructed by our office. Gradually increase the distance you walk until you can walk about one mile within one to two months after surgery.
- ❖ Do not lift more than 10lbs for the first 4 weeks after surgery.

- ❖ Avoid stairs while you are wearing your collar—they are a fall hazard.
- ❖ You should be able to gradually increase your distance.
- ❖ No bending or twisting at the waist during the first 4 weeks after surgery.
- ❖ A "special" mattress is not required after surgery. You should avoid sleeping on a waterbed—it does not provide appropriate spine support.

Smoking

DO NOT SMOKE. This increases the chance that your bone will not heal properly. Smoking decreases the rate of skin and bone healing. Smoking also interferes with the effectiveness of your pain medication. This can impact the success of your lumbar fusion.

Constipation

The combination of surgery, narcotic pain medicine, decreased activity level, and a change in your diet, can play a role in getting constipated. After surgery, it is common to have a problem with your bowels. Increasing your fiber intake, mobility, and taking a stool softener will help.

Future Clinic Visits

The office will help you schedule your first clinic visit in 2 weeks. For all other patients, your first clinic visit will be scheduled for 4 weeks.

Driving

You are free to drive after 2 weeks after surgery.

It is the policy of our office to advise you not to drive while under the influence of pain medications.

Dentist

As part of your surgery, spinal instrumentation was used. You should notify your dentist of this prior to having dental work/cleaning. It is advised that you be pre-medicated with antibiotics prior to these procedures for the first 2 years following your surgery. The antibiotics should be given to you by your dentist.

When to call the office

- ❖ Excessive redness, swelling, or drainage at the incision site, particularly swelling around the back incision. Contact us if drainage persists for more than 2 days. Be prepared to describe what the drainage looks like, how it smells, and how much there is.
- ❖ If you have a temperature of 100.5 degrees or higher lasting longer than 4 hours.
- ❖ Loss of bladder or bowel control
- ❖ Redness, warmth, or tenderness in the back of the calf of your leg(s)
- ❖ A persistent headache that is different when sitting

Phone Numbers

If you have questions or concerns, please call **Neuromicrospine at 850-934-7545.**