

Post-operative instructions

Lumbar Discectomy or Laminectomy

- 1) Expect to be discharged the day of or the day following surgery
- 2) You will be given pain medicine and muscle relaxants to take home when you're discharged. You may also start anti-inflammatories such as Alleve or Advil the day after you get home.
- 3) Ice the incision three to four times a day, for 10 minutes, for the first week post-operatively.
- 4) The stitches are dissolvable. The incision should be kept dry for 5 days; you can shower with the dressing on. You can then leave it open to air and the steri-strips will fall off over the next 1-2 weeks.
- 5) Expect low back pain for 3-7 days after surgery. The leg pain should be much better although you may feel twinges in certain positions.
- 6) You may drive 5-7 days after surgery.
- 7) Some patients develop more severe leg pain or tingling 2 to 7 days after surgery. This is usually just inflammation. If you call our office, we will prescribe a short course of steroids which should help with the pain.
- 8) Call the office after you get home and schedule your post-operative appointment which will be about 2-3 weeks after surgery.
- 9) Physical Therapy begins usually at about 4 weeks post-operatively. You will be given a prescription for it at your post-operative appointment.
- 10) For the first one month (4 weeks) after surgery, you can lift up to 10 lbs. You can start on a stationary exercise bike after 2 weeks (ideally a recumbent one) but no high impact activities for 4-6 weeks. For the first month after surgery, no twisting or bending from your low back.
- 11) After one month, you can gradually increase your activities as tolerated with supervision by the physical therapist.
- 12) Pain improves quickly after surgery, but muscle weakness can take several months and numbness can take more than a year. Sometimes, there is some permanent numbness, especially if you had it for a long time before the surgery.
- 13) Return to work is determined by your occupation, level of pain and function post-operatively and the restrictions outlined above.
- 14) If you have questions, please call the office.