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.