

LUMBAR SPINE (LOW BACK) SURGERY

DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS

Wayne Kelley, Jr. MD

These are general guidelines to follow once you return home following your back surgery.

ACTIVITY:

- ◆ Avoid bending, lifting, twisting your body, or stooping until after your return visit to the doctor.
- ◆ Take short walks often. If your discomfort begins to increase when you are up, lie down for a while.
- ◆ It is okay to go up steps with assistance to get into your house. If your home is multilevel, try to arrange to have everything you may need on one floor. If you do have to go upstairs, try to make only one trip each day (with assistance) until you see your doctor.
- ◆ Sexual activity can be resumed when comfort permits. The bottom passive position is best tolerated by most persons following surgery. Feel free to discuss any concerns with the nurse or with your doctor.

SITTING:

- ◆ You should begin sitting only for a meal or to go to the bathroom (about 10 to 15 minutes). Sit in a straight back chair or a rocking chair.
- ◆ After the first week, you may gradually increase your sitting time. If you feel increased discomfort after sitting for awhile, you should decrease the amount of time you sit.

TRAVEL:

- ◆ You may be more comfortable riding in a car by lying down in the back seat or reclining in the front seat after your surgery.

Until you see your doctor:

- ◆ Do not ride for more than 15 or 20 minutes at a time.
- ◆ Do not drive while taking narcotics.

NUTRITION:

- ◆ Eat a balanced diet including fruits and vegetables.
- ◆ To avoid constipation drink plenty of fluids, especially water. Prune juice can be helpful.
- ◆ You may use a mild laxative for constipation. Ask your doctor about specific laxatives.
- ◆ Use OTC stool softener/laxative as needed for constipation, unless not passing flatus, abdomen becomes distended, nausea, vomiting—then visit ER for evaluation.

LUMBAR SPINE (LOW BACK) SURGERY DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS

BRACES AND CORSETS:

- ◆ Corsets are prescribed by your doctor only for your comfort and recovery. They may not be prescribed in all cases.
- ◆ Corsets should be worn about 3 to 4 weeks after surgery. Wear when you are out of bed. Wearing your corset in bed is optional unless instructed to do so by your doctor.

If you had a fusion:

- ◆ Wear your brace until your doctor says you no longer need it. You do not need to wear it in bed or when getting up to go to the bathroom unless otherwise instructed.

SHOWERING AND WOUND CARE:

- ◆ Do **not** take tub baths after your surgery.
- ◆ You may shower once you feel comfortable enough to do so after your surgery.
- ◆ Incisions with **staples** need to be kept covered with plastic during showering.
- ◆ Incision with **steri-strips** can get wet in the shower beginning 3 days after your surgery and as long as there is no drainage from the incision or on the dressing.

FOLLOW-UP APPOINTMENT:

- ◆ If your appointment was not made before you left the hospital, call the office to schedule one as soon as possible.
- ◆ Your appointment will be about 4 weeks after surgery.
- ◆ Write down any questions as they occur to you and discuss them with the nurse or doctor.

WHEN TO CALL YOUR DOCTOR:

- ◆ **Temperature greater than 101°, sweats, chills**
- ◆ **Drainage from incisions or increased redness around incision**
- ◆ **Increasing pain, numbness or weakness**
- ◆ **Headache that becomes worse when out of bed**

If you have any concerns before your appointment please call OrthoGeorgia at (478) 745-4206.