



INSTRUCTIONS AFTER YOUR THORACIC OR LUMBAR FUSION

- Incisions may be closed with either:
 - Steri-strip tapes (let them wear off on their own).
 - Surgical glue (let it peel off on its own).
 - Sutures or staples (call the office for an appointment to have these removed).
- Keep the incision dry for the first three days after surgery. Never apply ointments or lotions to the incision.
- The incision should be checked daily. Notify the office if there is drainage, redness, or if you have fever with a temperature of over 100 degrees.
- You are encouraged to walk as much as comfortable, with assistance as needed. For example, it may be beneficial to walk short distances hourly during the waking hours and gradually increase walking during your recovery period. Fatigue can be common.
- If a brace has been requested by your physician, it should be always worn when up. The brace does not need to be worn when you are in bed. It may be removed for short periods, such as bathing and using the bathroom.
- Avoid any bending, heavy lifting, or twisting movements.
- You have an eight-to-ten-pound lift restriction until further advised by your physician (A gallon of milk weighs eight pounds).
- Sometimes a bone growth stimulator will be used postop. Instructions for the use of a stimulator will come from your representative.
- Make frequent position changes, avoiding long periods of sitting. Try not to sit more than 30 minutes at a time.
- You may engage in sexual activity in two weeks as tolerated.
- No housework, especially vacuuming, making beds, or doing laundry until seen in the office.
- You may walk stairs carefully.
- Minimize car rides for two weeks. Driving can usually be resumed within three to four weeks, however you may not drive at that time if still taking pain medications.
- Once you are discharged from the hospital, please call the office to set up your postop appointment.
- The physician may order pain medication and/or muscle relaxers. As time goes by, you should require less of these. Always take your medication as ordered, and only if needed. If you take more than prescribed, it will not be refilled early. If you feel you require narcotic medication refill, kindly give the office a 72-hour notice. No refills are given over the weekend.
- Avoid use of anti-inflammatory medications (like Ibuprofen, Aleve, Advil, Motrin) for up to three months following fusion surgery. Use of these medications may slow healing. Over the counter Tylenol products may be used but use caution mixing Tylenol with your pain medication. The common pain pills include acetaminophen as an ingredient. Tylenol and Acetaminophen are the same drug. You could cause liver damage if taking too much.

- Resume your usual diet. Constipation is a common problem postop. You may use any over the counter laxative, or stool softener. Always follow the bottle directions.
- Use of nicotine products should be stopped completely. Smoking can slow the healing process significantly. It can also increase the chance for developing postop pneumonias and other complications. Please avoid use of all nicotine products for at least three months after spine surgery.
- **FOR AN EMERGENCY AFTER HOURS OR ON A WEEKEND, PLEASE CALL THE MEDICAL EXCHANGE AT (844) 942-1558**
- Call the office for:
 - Appointment set up.
 - Fever greater than 101 degrees.
 - Increased pain, swelling, redness or drainage from your incision.
 - Trouble swallowing or breathing.
 - Pain, swelling or weakness of your legs.
 - Any other question or concerns you may have.