



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.

Wound

- Your incision will be assessed at your post-surgical visit. Most sutures are dissolvable.
- Begin changing your dressings daily after hospital discharge. You may shower but you need to cover the incisions with a plastic covering to keep it dry. **Do not swim or soak in water for 8 weeks.**
- 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.
- Do not put creams or ointments on the wound for 3 weeks after surgery.

Brace/DME

- You will be given a lumbar brace to wear after surgery. You should wear the brace anytime you are out of bed. You will be required to wear the brace for about 6 weeks.
- You will be given a second brace to wear in the shower.
- If you are at high risk for poor bone healing and/or have a multiple level fusion, you may be placed in a bone growth stimulator. You need to wear this daily as directed for 6 months.

Pain Relief

- Our office will provide you with prescription pain medication to help with your surgical pain. You should use these medications only as directed and only if needed.
- As your incision heals, we would expect you to begin weaning from prescription medications. This should begin about 4-5 weeks after surgery.
- **Remember, ABSOLUTLEY NO MEDICATION REFILLS WILL BE PROCESSED ON THE**

WEEKEND. Please plan accordingly. Contact your pharmacy to process all refill requests.

- If you are prescribed antibiotics after surgery, please finish them in their entirety.
- You may use an OTC stool softener or mild laxative to assist with having bowel movements.
- You will need to avoid anti-inflammatory medications for 1 week before and 3 months following surgery.
- You will need to avoid blood thinners (Aspirin, Coumadin, Lovenox, Plavix) for 1 week prior to surgery. In most cases, you may restart them (at the doctor's discretion) 4 days after surgery or 4 days after drains are removed.
- 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.

Exercise/Activity

- Avoid riding in a car for 2 weeks – unless medically necessary.
- The best exercise is walking. Small amounts done frequently are best. Try to set a goal of one mile per day total. It is best to stay mobile.
- Wear the white compression stockings given to you at the hospital for 2 weeks following surgery. You can take them off when walking but should wear them at night and when inactive for prolonged periods.
- Follow the instructions given to you by the physical therapist at the hospital prior to discharge.
- You should limit sitting to 20 minutes per hour during the first 3-4 weeks following surgery. After that, you may **gradually** increase sitting as tolerated. Sitting in a recliner is the same as sitting in a regular chair.
- No bending or twisting at the waist during the first 6 weeks after surgery. You will begin physical therapy at 6 weeks (3 x week for 4 weeks) and they will assist you in returning to these activities.
- Do not lift more than 5-10 lbs for the first 6-8 weeks after surgery. Physical therapy will assist you to increase the weight limit.
- Avoid stairs during the first 4 weeks after surgery – they are a fall hazard.
- A "special" mattress is not required after surgery. You should avoid sleeping on a waterbed – they do not provide good spine support.
- **DO NOT SMOKE.** This increases the chance that your bone will not heal properly. See your primary care physician if you need assistance to quit smoking.

Driving

- You are not allowed to drive for approximately 6-7 weeks after surgery. You will need to start physical therapy (2-3 visits) prior to being allowed to drive.
- It is the policy of this office to advise you not to drive while under the influence of pain medications.

Return to Work

- If you can work from home, you can begin doing light desk/phone work as tolerated about 2 weeks after surgery.
- If you have to report to the office to perform your job, you will be able to do this at 6-10 weeks after surgery. You will be restricted to light desk/phone type work.
- If your job requires heavy physical activity, you will be unable to perform this type of work for at least 3-6 months after surgery.

Follow-up

- You have a follow-up scheduled with one of our clinical staff in our Plano office on _____ . Please arrive at least 10 minutes early to check in and get your x-rays done. Please expect to have x-rays done at each scheduled follow-up appointment.

What to Watch For

- Please contact our office for any of the following:
 - Oral temperature greater than 100.5 ° F
 - Excessive redness, swelling, or drainage at the incision site
 - New, increasing pain/numbness/weakness in your arms/legs
 - Clear liquid draining from the wound
 - Headaches or dizziness that occurs when upright that is better with lying down
 - Swelling in the legs – especially if in one leg only
- For general medical problems such as sore throat, cough, nasal drainage, etc., please contact your primary care physician. You should also contact your primary care physician regarding in questions about your routine medications not prescribed by this office.
- For medical emergencies, please call 911 or report to the nearest emergency room.



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Date of Surgery: _____ Scheduled Surgery Time: _____ Hospital Arrival Time: _____ No food or drink after midnight day prior to surgery.