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Instructions for before and after surgery **Anterior and Posterior Lumbar Fusion**

Before You Have Surgery

Do not eat or drink after midnight the night before surgery. Please take all routine medications the day of surgery unless otherwise directed by Dr. Mathur, his nurse (Melissa), or Hospital Staff.

Medications to Stop & When:

You may stay overnight in the hospital. Please bring your brace to the hospital the day of surgery. While you recover at home it is important you protect your lumbar spine as it heals. This can best be achieved by following the below instructions and contacting your nurse with any questions or concerns.

When You Return Home

Your initial activity level will be influenced by the anesthetic agent you have received. It is not uncommon to feel drowsy or tired for a number of hours. Rest when you need it. Symptoms may peak at 2-5 days after surgery, and then will begin to subside.

Diet:

- After surgery you may go home on a liquid diet, return to your normal diet slowly as tolerated.
- Calories and protein are very important for the healing process. Restricting these is not recommended during this time.

Back Brace:

- Remove your brace to sleep and shower.
- You will wear your brace when sitting or standing longer than 10minutes.
- You may sleep on your back or your side. Place a pillow between your knees if you're on your side to sleep; this will help keep your spine in proper alignment.
- You are to wear your back brace until you come to your first post op appointment. At this time we will discuss further use of the brace. The brace is commonly needed until 6weeks.
- The purpose of your brace is to stabilize your back to allow for superior healing.

Incision Care/Shower:

- You will have 2 separate incision sites.
 - 1 on the low abdomen from Dr. Watters.
 - Multiple small incisions on the low back (up to 6).
- You will have a dry dressing (gauze & tape) over your incisions when you leave the hospital.
- You may need to change your dressings once per day to keep it dry and clean- Gauze & Tape.
- Your incisions will be closed with internal stitches that will dissolve by themselves, and surgical glue on top. The glue may start to flake off, this is normal. Please do not pull off the glue.
- Your incision may also be covered with steri-strips. These will fall off.
- **You may take a shower 3 days after surgery if you have internal stitches and glue.**
- **If you have exterior stitches, you may shower 5 days after surgery.**
- In the shower allow soapy water to fall over incision. No scrubbing.
- After your shower you do not have to keep your incision covered unless it has drainage.
- If you have exterior stitches or staples we will remove them at your first post op visit.
- **DO NOT** use any creams, oils, lotions or medications on incision until approved by Dr. Mathur.
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Pain/Discomfort/Medications:

- **Pain is expected after surgery. You may also experience bloating and bowel changes.**
- **Most often, abdominal incision pain is worse than back pain after surgery.**



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- Please take the prescribed medication that was provided for you after surgery as directed.
 - Pain Medication
 - Muscle Relaxant is for muscle spasms or muscle tightness you may experience.
- Pain medication can be constipating. Please try and prevent this with Colace (stool softner) or other over the counter stool softeners or laxatives that can be purchased at the pharmacy.
- After the first 2 weeks after surgery, efforts should be made to start decreasing pain medication intake, if possible.
- You may resume all other prior medications.
- **Do NOT** use any non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs) after surgery for a minimum of 4-6 months. These medications slow the fusion healing process.
 - Examples: Ibuprofen, Advil, Aleve, Celebrex, Vioxx, Naproxen
- Acetaminophen products may be used.
 - Examples: Tylenol, Excedrin

Activity:

- **We encourage you to walk!** It will help the healing process by moving your blood in your body and will increase/maintain muscle strength. With this said, take it slow. Walk as tolerated.
 - No dog walking until approved by Dr. Mathur or his clinical staff.
 - No pools, bath tubs, Jacuzzis, Etc. until approved by Dr. Mathur, about 6weeks after surgery.
 - No lifting more than 20 pounds, no bending, or twisting.
 - Practice good posture when you walk and sit. This helps reduce stress on your back
- Driving: You must wait until after your first post op appointment to drive.

Work:

- Most patients may return to work in 2-4weeks after surgery. This is dependent upon your job requirements. Please discuss this with Dr. Mathur or his nurse.
- Work notes will be provided as needed. You may request a work note at your appointment or call the nurse, as work allowances increase and notes may need to be adapted.

Follow-Up:

- Your first follow up appointment will be scheduled 10 days after surgery. Healing is gradual and you will follow up over the next year.
- Physical Therapy will begin after your first post op appointment. Until then, walk!

Call your nurse if you have any of the following:

1. Fever and/or chills
2. Redness or excessive discharge at incision
3. New Numbness, Weakness or Headache
4. Severe bloating, Nausea or Vomiting.

Please call your nurse with any questions or concerns. The nurse is available Monday-Friday 8am-5pm. After hours someone is always on call, so please call 919-297-0000. If you need immediate/emergent help after hours please go to your local emergency department.

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