

Lumbar Laminectomy

Patient post-operative instructions

Typical hospital course

Some patients go home the same day. Others stay 1 to 2 nights depending on pain control, walking, drain output, and the number of levels treated.

Key limits / reminders

No lifting more than 10 pounds, and avoid repetitive bending, twisting, or impact activity for the first 6 weeks.

Before surgery

- You will review whether your surgery will be minimally invasive or open at your pre-op visit.
- You will receive medication, arrival, and fasting instructions before surgery.

After surgery

- Back soreness and muscle spasm are common early after surgery.
- If several levels are treated, a drain may be used and removed before discharge.
- Walking is expected soon after surgery, often the same day or the next morning.

Incision and showering

- Keep the dressing clean and dry. Call if it becomes soaked, peels off, or you are not sure how to change it.
- Showering is allowed if the dressing and incision stay dry. No soaking until cleared.

Activity

- Walking is encouraged immediately. Increase distance gradually.
- You may return to light daily activities as comfort allows, but avoid lifting more than 10 pounds, repeated bending, twisting, or impact exercise for 6 weeks.
- Return to full activity is commonly between 8 and 16 weeks depending on surgical findings and your progress.

Medications, driving, and work

- Many patients only need opioid pain medication for several days, then transition to Tylenol and, when medically appropriate, NSAIDs.
- Do not drive while taking opioid pain medication or muscle relaxers.
- Return to desk work may happen relatively early, but physical work should wait until you are cleared.

Follow-up

- Typical follow-up is around 2 weeks and 6 weeks, with additional visits if needed.

Constipation

- Opioid pain medication commonly causes constipation. Start a stool softener and/or gentle laxative if needed, drink fluids, and stop these medicines if you develop loose stools or diarrhea.
- If you go several days without a bowel movement despite over-the-counter treatment, call the office.

Smoking / nicotine

- Avoid smoking and nicotine while you are healing. It can increase the risk of wound problems and slow recovery.

Call right away for

- Increasing pain that is not controlled with the prescribed medication plan.
- New or worsening weakness, numbness, tingling, loss of balance, or new trouble using your arms or legs.
- Redness, swelling, warmth, drainage, or a bad smell from the incision.
- Fever of 101 F or higher.
- Inability to urinate, loss of bowel or bladder control, or new saddle numbness.
- New calf pain or swelling, chest pain, coughing up blood, or shortness of breath.

Questions or concerns: call the office. For chest pain, severe shortness of breath, or another emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department.