



**Patient Discharge Instructions for
Posterior Lumbar Spinal Fusion
William F. Lestini M.D.**

These instructions are designed to provide a general outline for you following surgery. For specific questions, please feel free to contact my office. Our office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8:00 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday.

Trip home

- You should ride home in the front passenger seat and use a seat belt. The seat can be reclined to comfort.
- During the ride home, plan to stop periodically and stretch your legs or take brief walks.
- Before you leave the hospital, especially if you have a long ride, please ask for medication.

Medication

- Before you are discharged, we will review all prescriptions with you. Please feel free to ask questions of either myself, the nurse, or physician assistant.
- If you run out of a medication before your return appointment, please contact my office directly for a renewal **during office hours**. Please allow 48 hours for refills due to potential pharmacy or insurance delays. **Prescriptions will not be refilled at night or on weekends.** If you have any problems with any of the medications, do not hesitate to call.
- It is usual to experience some back and leg pain. This should progressively improve. Often, cramping pain or soreness is associated with increasing your activities too rapidly. If this is the case, restricting your activities for a day or so will often help dramatically. If there is a return of severe pain, call my office.
- Notify us of any increased weakness and /or numbness in your legs or if you develop any bowel or bladder problems.

Wound Care and Return Appointment

- Generally, stitches are placed under the skin and will be absorbed by your body. There will be small pieces of adhesive tape superficially, which can be removed in about 14 days. If these become dirty or sticky, they may be removed earlier.
- Sutures or staples may be placed in the skin. **These are removed 10 –14 days after surgery.** If you are coming back to our office to have these removed, your appointment for suture/staple removal should have been made at the time of your surgical scheduling. If there is any question about this date, call the office during business hours and confirm the follow-up appointment.
- You may wish to have your sutures/staples removed closer to home if you live a great distance from our office. A doctor or nurse can do this if arrangements can be made. If so, you will need to schedule an appointment to return to Triangle Spine approximately *six weeks after your surgery*. Please coordinate these plans with the office scheduling secretary.
- **You should keep your incision dry for 3-5 days after surgery.** Your doctor will tell you when you can begin showering. After showering, blot the incision dry with sterile gauze and then cover with a dry sterile dressing. You should typically change the dressing daily for about two weeks. Under no circumstances scratch your incision. Avoid clothes that may rub directly on the incision. Vitamin E cream may be applied to your incision to decrease scarring once it is well healed, usually 4-6 weeks post-surgery.

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Wound Care and Return Appointment, continued

- After suture/staple removal, Steri-strips will be applied. The incision should be *kept dry for two days after suture/staple removal*, after which showering (over the strips) can be resumed. The strips can be removed in about seven days, if they haven't fallen off sooner.
- If you notice any incisional drainage, increased redness, or severe tenderness, please contact my office.
- Under no circumstances scratch your incision and avoid clothes that rub directly on the incision.

Activities

- Plan to gradually resume your normal lifestyle. In general, it is good to progressively increase the amount of time you are walking. Begin with short walks and progressively increase the number of walks and the distance you walk. A progressively increasing walking program is the best overall body toner during the early postoperative period.
- You may ride in a car, but avoid long trips until after you have returned for a follow-up visit. You can start to drive about three weeks postoperatively, if you feel up to it.
- Remember that you have just gone through a major operation and avoid activities which may result in a fall.
- In general, wear the lumbar corset when you are out of bed for any length of time. If it bothers you in any way, then you may be out of bed without the corset.
- You can walk normally, but avoid any significant extension (bending backward), flexion (bending forward), and rotation of your back and trunk.
- Do not lift any heavy objects. A good reference is nothing heavier than a gallon of milk. When lifting, bend from your hips and knees, not your back.
- Continue to use your incentive spirometer and do your calf exercises, as instructed in the hospital.
- In general, avoid athletic activities until you have been seen in follow up. If there are any specific questions concerning this, please contact my office.
- You may resume sexual activities when this is comfortable for you.
- Ask for advice on you activity level during your follow up visit.

Diet

- Once you have started to pass gas regularly and if your abdomen is normal size and not overly distended, you may progress to your regular diet. It is a good idea to keep yourself well-hydrated, drinking plenty of water. You may also supplement your diet with 1-2 high calorie shakes, such Boost®, daily.
- A multivitamin with iron should be taken daily.
- Calcium citrate 600mg with vitamin D should be taken twice a day, unless otherwise medically contraindicated.
- Resume your regular diet with the addition of roughage, such as fruits or grain, and drink plenty of fluids. The roughage and fruits will help avoid constipation, which may be associated with your medications. You may use an over-the-counter stool softener or laxative, if needed.
- If you smoke and continue to smoke after your surgery, you do so against medical advice.

I have read this information and all questions have been answered:

Patient signature

William F. Lestini, M.D.

Witness

____/____/____
Date

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