



LUMBAR FUSION PATIENT EDUCATION FORM

Contact Information: **EXCEL ORTHOPEDICS**

During office hours Monday-Thurs (8am-4pm), Friday (8am-3pm) call (636) 778-3177

After office hours call (866) 830-5403

MEDICATIONS:

- You will be prescribed pain medication such as Norco, Percocet, or Oxycodone. Since you had a fusion surgery, **AVOID** the use of anti-inflammatory medications, such as Advil, ibuprofen, Aleve, Motrin, etc. These drugs can inhibit healing and slow the fusion process.
- After the first or second week you may notice you do not need to take the medication as often as prescribed. You can then begin to take your pain medication as needed. You may **NOT** take them more often than ordered. If you feel your pain is not well controlled contact our office.
- If you are taking acetaminophen (Tylenol) in addition to the prescribed medication it is **important to NOT exceed four grams (4000 milligrams) per day**. The base of the pain medication is often acetaminophen (Tylenol).
- A common side effect of pain medication is constipation. It is important to eat a well-balanced diet and drink plenty of water. Most likely you will need to take an over-the-counter stool softener while you are taking the pain medication.
- **DO NOT use any tobacco or nicotine containing products**. This includes nicotine patches. These products delay the fusion process and are not good for overall healing after surgery.

ACTIVITY:

- ***The most important thing you can do to aid recovery is to be up and moving around.*** Walk each day and steadily increase the amount of walking you do. Your muscles will become stiff and sore if you are not up and walking. Immobility also leads to an increased risk of blood clots, particularly after surgery.
- Avoid running or walking on steep inclines.
- Avoid bending, twisting, or stooping. If you need to bend down, bend at the knees, and not at the waist. It will be less painful to use your thigh muscles rather than your lower back muscles.
- **DO NOT LIFT** anything heavier than **5 pounds** until your first postoperative visit.
- Avoid sitting or standing positions for more than 20 to 30 minutes at a time.
- If you have been given an abdominal binder or an adjustable lumbar brace, wear it when you are up and moving. A brace will help support and stabilize your lower back muscles. It may be taken off for short periods of time, such as while you shower or when you are in a seated position. You may or may not want to wear the brace when you are sleeping. Typically, you will wear your brace for **4 to 6 weeks** after surgery.
- You may resume sexual activity when you feel ready.
- You may drive when you feel you can tolerate it. This typically is around two weeks after surgery. Remember **NOT** to drive immediately after taking your pain medication or muscle relaxant.
- Your surgeon will discuss your return to work at your follow-up appointment if earlier arrangements have not been made.



INCISION:

- **Keep your incision clean and dry at all times.** You may shower, but must cover and water seal your incision. When showering keep your incision away from the stream of water. No bathing or soaking of incision. No swimming in hot tubs, pools, lakes, oceans, etc.
- Your incision will be closed with sutures or staples. Many sutures do not need to be removed because they are absorbed by the body. If you have staples or removable sutures, these will be taken out at your first follow-up appointment in **two to three weeks**. Change the dressing daily using dry gauze and tape until your follow-up appointment.
- Do not put ointments or creams on your incision.
- As your incision heals it may itch, but avoid scratching it.
- Often times you may get an area of swelling directly under your incision. As long as there is no redness, drainage, or tenderness the swelling will typically resolve. Watch the area closely for changes.
- Avoid swimming pools or hot tubs until cleared by your surgeon.

SCHEDULED FOLLOW UP:

- Your next follow-up visit will be **two to three weeks** following your surgery for wound evaluation. Additional follow-up will be scheduled at that time.
- **We want to evaluate you in clinic if you have any signs or symptoms of an infection.** This includes: excess draining, foul odor, increased pain at the incision site, increased redness, opening of the incision, or fever greater than 101.5. Contact the clinic during regular office hours (Monday through Thursday 8am-4pm, Friday 8am-3pm) at (636) 778-3177. After hours contact the exchange at (866) 830-5403.

REASONS TO CONTACT YOUR SPINE SURGEON:

- Pain not controlled with pain medications
- Temperature greater than 101.5
- Increased redness, tenderness, opening of incision, drainage, or foul odor from your incision
- Leg swelling or calf tenderness
- Increased numbness or tingling in an extremity
- Any abdominal distention (if occurs, stop all narcotic pain medications and revert to a clear liquid diet)
- Any questions or concerns you may have