
Instructions for _____ Following a Lumbar Fusion

1. No driving for 4 weeks and only drive if you feel well enough. You may ride in a car as tolerated.
2. Stand and walk (even a few steps count) 5 times a day and progressively increase your activity as tolerated. No lifting, bending, twisting or straining of your low back. Avoid soft furniture. Sit upright and use good posture
3. No meals in bed. Getting up and moving about is important for your recovery.
4. Take a few deep breaths and cough every 15 minutes you are awake for the first week.
5. Take your pain pills and muscle relaxants if needed but do not take more than prescribed. **Pain medications and muscle relaxants will not be refilled early.** Do not drive or operate machinery while taking your medications.
6. Do not take anti-inflammatories, for example, Motrin (Ibuprofen), Aleve (Naprosyn) and other such medications. These inhibit the fusion.
7. **NO SMOKING!!** This greatly inhibits healing and is a major cause for a failed fusion. If your fusion should fail, it often requires a surgery much bigger than the one you just had. Smoking also increases the risk of infection.
8. You may shower 2 days after your drains are out. Prior to showering, please remove your bandage. Leave the steri-strips (the little tape strips) in place. At the end of your shower, rinse off your incision with clean water and then pat it dry. You may loosely place a new bandage on the incision only after it is completely dry. A clean dry wound will almost never get infected. A moist wound greatly increases the risk of infection.
9. If you experience leg pain that is worse than before your surgery, notify our office. Some pain is normal. This should improve with time.
10. **Notify us (call) for temperature above 101 degrees, drainage from your incision, "breaking open" of your incision or other signs of an infection.** Some swelling, hard knots, and bruising may be present. These will go away eventually.
11. Please contact us (501-278-8330) if you have any problems or questions. If you need to speak with someone after hours, call WCMC hospital and ask for the doctor on call for Dr. Ricca.
12. If you need a refill of your pain pills or muscle relaxants, please plan ahead and let us know before you run out. We are not always able to refill them the day you call. **We do not provide prescriptions after hours or on weekends. We do not refill prescriptions early, even if they are lost or stolen.**
13. You may return to work whenever you feel able. Please contact us if you need a release to return to work prior to your follow-up appointment.
14. Please come to your follow-up appointment 30 minutes early so we can get x-rays for Dr. Ricca to review with you.
15. Your follow-up with Dr. Ricca is on _____ at _____.