



Houston MicroNeurosurgery

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Patient Instructions after Lumbar Laminectomy/Discectomy

Activity – Walk as much as you can, as soon as you can after surgery. Do not lift anything heavier than 10 lb for the first week. You may bend at the waist (e.g. to put on your shoes), but do so infrequently. After the first week, you can gradually increase your activities. Most lumbar discectomy patients begin outpatient physical therapy, starting one week after surgery. Older patients or those with significant disability may require inpatient rehabilitation after surgery before they are discharged from the hospital.

Pain Medications – You will receive prescriptions for pain medications upon discharge from the hospital. Take these medications only if you have pain. Try to reduce your intake of pain medications and get off them as soon as you can. You may take Tylenol or anti-inflammatory drugs (Motrin, Aleve, Celebrex, Vioxx, Bextra, etc.) instead of your narcotic pain medication. Do not take Tylenol with your pain medications, since most prescribed pain medications already have Tylenol in them. If you require a refill on your pain medication, call it in to the pharmacy and allow for a 24-hour turn-around time from our office. If you request refills on pain medications too frequently, or for too long after the surgery, they may not be approved.

Other Medications – Take all your medications (except aspirin and blood thinners) as you were taking them before the surgery. You can take your aspirin starting 3 days after surgery. If you take a blood thinner such as coumadin, make sure to ask Dr. Pakzaban about it.

Return to Work – You may return to a non-physical type of job whenever you feel well. Realistically, this is usually 1-2 weeks after the surgery. You must not drive or operate machinery if you are still taking pain medications. Those who perform physical work will have to discuss their work situation with Dr. Pakzaban on a case by case basis.

Driving – Do not drive for 1 week after the surgery. Do not drive while on pain medications. You may ride in a car as a passenger as soon after the surgery as you wish. If you go for a long trip in the first month after surgery, stop once an hour and walk around for 5 minutes.

Bathing – You may take a shower the day after surgery, but try to keep your lumbar incision dry for the first week. You can accomplish this by wrapping saran wrap around your back and belly or by buying and using water-proof bandages. After the first week, you can allow

the water to run over your incision. You should not submerge your incision under water (e.g. in a swimming pool or bath tub) until your incision has completely healed (about 3 weeks).

Care of Incision – You can remove your bandage one day after surgery. If you have dissolvable sutures, you will find Steri-Strips (little white “butterfly” tapes) under the bandage. Do not remove the Steri-Strips: they will begin to peel off about 2 weeks after surgery. If you have staples or regular sutures, you can clean your incision once a day with hydrogen peroxide, then cover it with an antibiotic ointment (such as Neosporin, or Bacitracin, or triple antibiotic ointment). You do not have to put a bandage back on, but you may do so if you wish.

Watch for Infection – Call us if you develop a fever greater than 101 degrees, or redness around the incision, or pus coming out of the incision. Have someone check your incision once per day. Some swelling and bruising around the incision are normal. A small amount of bloody drainage is OK, but large amounts of clear fluid or pus coming from the incision should be reported to Dr. Pakzaban immediately.

Follow-up Appointment – Call the office to arrange for a follow-up appointment soon after surgery. The first follow-up visit usually occurs within 7 – 10 days after surgery. This is a brief visit during which Dr. Pakzaban will check your incision, ask about your symptoms, review your drug intake, and answer any questions or concerns that you may have. You will also receive your physical therapy orders in this visit.

Call us during office hours for routine questions. For urgent problems, Dr. Pakzaban can be paged at nights and on weekends.

Have a good recovery.

Peyman Pakzaban, M.D.