

Wichita Mountain
Neurosurgery
& Spine

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GOING HOME AFTER A LUMBAR LAMINECTOMY
A Brief Guide to Aid in Your Recovery

You need time to heal after back surgery. It can take 4 to 6 weeks for the swelling to go down around your muscles, tendons and soft tissues. It's natural to feel some tightness or pain around your incision. It is not uncommon to occasionally feel pain similar to the pain you had before surgery. If you become tired or have low back pain, just get in bed, rest and use the *Iceman*. This need not be cause for worry.

It is, however, very important to take care of yourself during your recovery period. There are certain things you should and should not do in the time before your first visit back to our office.

BELOW IS A LIST OF GUIDELINES:

1. Avoid lifting objects over 10 pounds until further notice.
2. Keep your sitting to a minimum, especially in the first four weeks. Try not to sit for more than 30 minutes at a time -- either walk, stand or lie down for at least 30 minutes before sitting again. When you do sit, make sure the seat is firm and has a good back support. Many people find rockers and recliners to be comfortable.
3. You may ride in a car as a passenger to go home from the hospital. Thereafter, only ride as a passenger if your back doesn't hurt. If have to travel a long distance, recline your seat back, or lay down in the back seat. You should also stop for about 10 minutes each hour so that you can walk around and stretch your back. You may be able to drive a car about 2 weeks after discharge from the hospital.
4. Refrain from sexual relations for at least 2 weeks after your discharge from the hospital.
5. Do not exercise, unless your doctor advises otherwise. However, we do want you to **walk**, as much as you find comfortable. The more you walk, the better your recovery.
6. Take showers, not tub baths, for 3 weeks after your discharge from the hospital. You may find it helpful to sit in a chair while you shower. Don't try to cover your incision.
7. Squat to pick things up or to wash yourself in the shower; avoid bending from the waist.
8. Do not move suddenly and twist your back.
9. The narcotics can cause severe **constipation**. It is important for you to move your bowels regularly and without straining. Use a bulking agent or laxative if necessary. You should be taking a stool softener as long as you are on a narcotic pain medication. If you are not on medication for constipation, call this office or your primary care doctor and get some.
10. Get your prescriptions filled upon discharge, and take the pain medicine **only as needed** to avoid becoming dependent on it. These are powerful drugs and are addicting. However, I'd much rather your take something for pain and walk, than not walk because of the pain.
11. If given an *ice machine*, you should use it for pain control at home for the first 2 weeks. Use the iceman for 20

minute intervals, at least 4 times per day.

12. Sleep on a mattress that is comfortable to you. Use a bed board under your mattress if necessary, and try propping your legs up on some pillows. Many people find sleeping in a recliner best for them. Don't worry about laying on your incision, it's more important that you're comfortable.

13. Wear flat shoes with good support for the first several weeks.

14. You can expect some tingling or pain in your leg, if it was present prior to surgery. You may even get sharp pains as before surgery. This should resolve in time. The nerve is unlikely to completely heal in just a few days

HERE ARE SOME ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR YOU TO FOLLOW:

During the *first week* after your discharge from the hospital:

You may walk up and down the stairs twice a day. Since you need to regain your strength, you should try to slowly increase your activity each day. Your goal is to be out of bed for at least half of the day. You can walk around the house, or as you feel comfortable, sit at the table for meals, watch television, read, etc.

During the *second week* after your discharge from the hospital:

You may walk up and down the stairs up to three times a day. Try to take brief walks outside (weather permitting) or at least around the house. Lie down for one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon.

During the *third week* after your discharge from the hospital:

You can go up and down the steps as many times as your pain allows. Begin building your strength and stamina by walking longer distances (two to four blocks) three times a day. Rest in between these walks.

***IF YOU EVER HAVE A QUESTION OR CONCERNS, REMEMBER
THAT WE ARE ONLY AS FAR AWAY AS THE TELEPHONE.***

OFFICE HOURS

Our office hours are **Monday through Friday from 8:30 AM to 4:00 PM**. We ask that you call between these hours with your questions, concerns, prescription refill requests, etc. As surgeons, we are frequently in the operating room and therefore unable to be available during all office hours. But during these times, and for your convenience and comfort, we have experienced personnel available to assist you.

PRESCRIPTIONS

All prescription refills and changes must be requested during office hours. We advise patients to monitor their need for refills so that refill requests can be made during your office visit.

EMERGENCIES

We understand that emergencies arise. If you feel that it is absolutely necessary to speak with your doctor during non-office hours, our answering service is available, by simply dialing any of our office telephone numbers listed below. **We ask that this service be reserved only for problems of an emergency nature.**

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