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## DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS

For Patients Who Have Undergone

### *Lumbar Spinal Fusion*

Please contact our office at (336) 333-6306 to schedule an appointment 4 weeks from the date of your surgery (if not already scheduled).

**1. Wound Care/Sutures.** The surgical dressing will be removed before discharge from the hospital. Do not apply creams and/or cleansers to the incision. There will be dermabond glue on your skin sealing the incision. This will peel off with time. Continue changing the dressing until all drainage from the wound stops. At that time, you do not have to cover your wound. However, if your incision is sensitive or your clothing is rubbing against your wound, you may apply clean, dry gauze to cover your wound. Report immediately any signs of drainage, fever, redness, swelling around the operative incision, or severe increased pain in any one of your extremities.

**2. Showers.** You may begin showering as soon as you feel safe in doing so. It is alright to get the incision wet in the shower. However, do not submerge incision under water.

**3. Incisional Swelling.** Swelling around the incision after surgery is normal. You may even notice a slight increase in swelling after activities. This will dissipate in time; however, please report any significant swelling, redness, fever, drainage or intractable pain!

**4. Post-Operative Blues.** So you're feeling better and the discomfort you're in now is nothing compared to what you endured before surgery ... or perhaps you feel quite the opposite. Many patients have verbalized frustration at not being able to resume normal activities – for example, driving, going back to work or participating in simple activities of daily living. Having to limit and curtail your activities, along with pain and discomfort, can leave you with the impression that you will never get better. There is a light at the end of the tunnel! Remember that your body needs to recover from major surgery. How you take care of yourself in the post-operative period will have direct bearing on the ultimate result. This is the time to take care of yourself. Rest, eat a well-balanced diet rich in protein, walk every day if possible, take a more positive attitude, and feel good about yourself. It takes a great deal of courage and determination to undergo what you have been through.

**5. Post-Operative Activities.** Once you are home, the aerobic exercise permitted is walking. We strongly encourage this, and it should be done in a progressive manner as tolerated, in a safe environment, and on flat surfaces. Avoid any lifting greater than 5 pounds.

*(Continued)*

**6. First Post-Operative Examination.** Upon your discharge from the hospital, please contact our office at (336) 333-6306 to schedule an appointment 4 weeks from the date of your surgery. At this appointment, sutures will be clipped if necessary, your wound will be checked and x-rays will be taken. Sutures for lumbar fusions are usually absorbable and do not need to be removed. You will be seen by a physician assistant. If you have any specific questions regarding your progress, it is a good idea to make a list and address these questions when you come in for this visit.

**7. Lumbar Brace.** If deemed necessary by your physician, you may be required to wear a lumbar brace. It will be necessary for you to adhere to wearing your lumbar brace on a daily basis. You should wear your brace when you are on your feet and especially when you go out for a walk or ride in a car. Don't be alarmed if you cannot tolerate wearing your brace during the initial post-op period. You may have residual inflammation and swelling around the surgical area which may make wearing the brace somewhat difficult. Give it time.

**9. Things to Avoid.**

- Prolonged standing in one place and prolonged sitting are not recommended as this may cause increased soreness and/or stiffness. If you need to sit for a prolonged period of time, it would be wise for you to get up intermittently, walk around and stretch your legs.
- Avoid bending until otherwise instructed by your doctor.
- Do not lift objects over 5 pounds.
- Avoid movements that were not recommended. You will be given instructions by a physical therapist while in the hospital on proper body mechanics.
- Minimize the amount of time spent in an automobile.
- If an activity provokes any discomfort, don't do it!!!

**10. Vitamin Supplements.** It is important that you take vitamin supplements post-operatively while your fusion is healing. We recommend that you take the following, with plenty of water: at least one Multi-Vitamin daily; 400 units twice daily of Vitamin D; and 500 mg twice daily of Calcium Citrate. You can obtain all of these at your local pharmacy, over-the-counter.

A successful post-operative recuperation is, in part, dependent on your adhering to these instructions. Thank you for your cooperation.