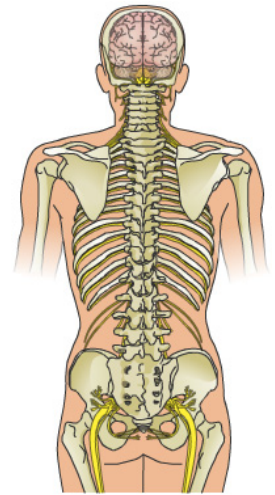


Laminectomy - Discharge Instructions

Introduction

You had a laminectomy. A laminectomy is surgery to relieve pressure on the nerves in the spine. It is done to treat back and leg pain and weakness caused by pinched nerves. Discharge instructions are specific directions for you to follow when you go home. The following discharge instructions will help you learn how to take care of yourself at home and when to call your health care provider.

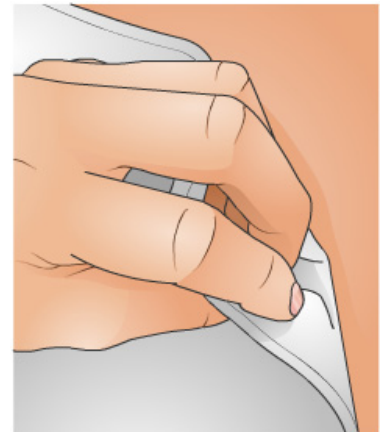


Ask your health care provider if you have any questions about your discharge instructions. Make sure that your health information and self care instructions are shared with your primary health care provider.

Incision

You will have an incision after a laminectomy. A dressing may cover your incision. You can remove this dressing 2 days after surgery. Keep the area around the incision clean by gently washing it with mild soap and water. You may take showers after a laminectomy unless your health care provider tells you not to. Cover your incision with a bandage that is waterproof. Pat the area around the incision dry after a shower.

During surgery, your incision may have been closed with glue, Steri-Strips[®], stitches or staples. If glue or Steri-Strips were used to close your skin, do not try to remove them. Let them fall off on their own. This usually happens within 10 days. If your incision was closed with stitches or staples, the incision should be kept dry until the stitches or staples are taken out by your health care team. This is usually within 7 to 10 days.



You may place an ice pack on the incision area for the first few days after surgery. This can help reduce swelling and pain.

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Activity

Your health care provider may limit your activity after a laminectomy. These limits can last for about 3 weeks. It may take a day for the full effects of the sedative used during the procedure to wear off. Rest and relax at home. Slowly increase your daily activities while you recover. Avoid strenuous activities and exercise until your health care provider tells you it is okay. Ask your health care provider when you can resume your normal activities.

You may feel weak or tired after the procedure, but it is important for you to walk. This helps prevent fluid buildup in the lungs. It also helps prevent blood clots in the veins of the legs and pelvis, which could travel to the lungs and lead to death. Avoid sitting for long periods of time. When you sit, prop your legs up to help prevent blood clots from forming. Ice can help lessen swelling or pain. Cover an ice pack with a towel and place it on your back for 15 minutes every hour.



Do not lift anything that weighs more than 10 pounds (4.5 kg) after your procedure. Do not bend or twist at the waist until your health care provider says it is okay. Bend your knees and keep your back straight if you need to pick something up. Do not drive while taking strong pain medications. Your health care provider will tell you when you can drive again.

Placing 2 or 3 pillows under your knees and the lower part of your legs can help prevent pain. Don't take a bath or use a hot tub for at least 2 weeks. Do not go swimming until your health care provider says it is okay. Stop smoking if you smoke. Smoking makes it harder for your body to heal. Talk to your health care provider if you need help quitting.



Diet

You may feel weak or nauseous after the procedure. Eat small meals frequently. This can help prevent nausea. Choose soft foods that are easy to digest. Soups may also help settle your stomach. Drinking a lot of water and other fluids can help prevent dehydration.

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Constipation is common after surgery. Take a stool softener as needed for the next 30 days. Eating foods that are high in fiber and drinking plenty of water can also help prevent constipation.

Medications

Your health care team will give you specific instructions about how to take your medications. Take prescribed medications as directed by your health care provider. Ask your health care provider how often and for how long you should take the medications they prescribe. Make sure you understand the reason for taking the medications and their possible side effects.



Check with your health care provider to see if there are medications you need to avoid. Tell your health care provider which medications you normally take and ask which ones should be continued when you are discharged. If some of your medications had to be stopped, ask when you can start taking them again. This is especially relevant for blood thinners.

When to Call your Health Care Provider

Seek medical care right away if you:

- Cannot control when you urinate or have a bowel movement.
- Have numbness in your back or buttocks.
- Have new weakness in your legs.

Contact your health care provider if you have:

- A fever higher than 100.4°F (38°C).
- Chills.
- Dizziness.

Call your health care provider right away if you have:

- Constant nausea or vomiting.
- Difficulty urinating.
- Drainage or bleeding from the incision.
- Redness or swelling around the incision area.
- Separation of the incision.



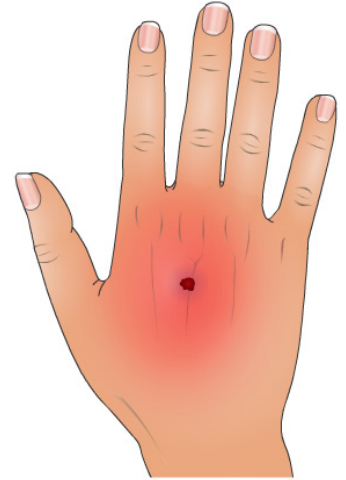
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You should also contact your health care provider if you experience symptoms of a blood clot in the legs. These include:

- Chest pain.
- Leg pain.
- Shortness of breath or breathing problems.
- Swelling in your leg.

If you had an IV during your procedure, see your health care provider if you notice signs of an infection where the needle was placed. These include:

- Bleeding or liquid drainage.
- Foul odor.
- Pain.
- Redness.
- Swelling.



Contact your health care provider if you have any questions or concerns about your discharge instructions.

Follow-Up

Go to all of your scheduled follow-up appointments. Call your health care provider if you need to set up the appointment. During the follow-up visit, your health care team will make sure that there are no complications and that you are recovering as expected.

Bring a written list of questions to the follow-up appointment. Examples include:

- When can I resume my usual activities?
- What are my restrictions? And for how long?
- When can I have sex?
- When can I travel?
- Do I need any more follow-up appointments?

