

Lumbar Spine Surgery

Your spine surgeon or neurosurgeon may have asked you to see us for your **SPINAL FUSION ACCESS SURGERY**. We have operated on over one thousand patients with this type of surgery.

Summary

Our role is to **provide a clear and safe path to the lumbar spine** for your fusion to be performed. We usually gain access to the spine through a virtual space known as the “retroperitoneum”, moving all the organs sitting in front of the lumbar disks. The length and location of the incision is dictated by the level of the spine to be fused and the number of levels that need to be accessed. We strive to perform an incision that is as small as possible without compromising patient safety. The closure of the wound is performed with dissolving sutures.

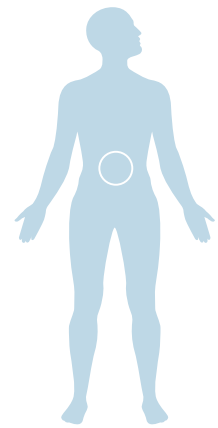
Recovery Process

The blood loss is usually minimal, and transfusions are the exception, especially in single level fusions. Complications are rare but could include DVT (*deep venous clots*), retrograde ejaculation, superficial wound infections and hernias. We have found that to reduce the risk of blood clots the patients should receive a daily injection of a blood thinner (*enoxaparin*) for about two weeks after surgery. Yes, even after you have been discharged home.

In many patients, incision pain can be addressed with the placement of a catheter (*tiny tube*) into the wound, connected to an external disposable balloon pump so that a nerve blocking drug (*local anesthetic*) is constantly delivered. This can result in reduction or elimination of incisional pain. The contents of the balloon provide medication for about 2 ½ days. If such a catheter is used in your case and you are ready to go home there may be residual medication in the pump at the time of your discharge. You may choose to go home with the pain pump in place. Removal of the catheter is rather easy.

Discharge from the hospital will depend on how well you are doing as far as pain control, diet and activity. Usual hospital stay for one level fusion is one to two days.

When you come in to see us for the preoperative evaluation we will discuss other details of the operation with you and we will be happy to answer your questions regarding our involvement in your care for this operation.



LUMBAR SPINAL FUSION
involves a bone graft to stop motion at a painful vertebral segment to decrease pain generated from the joint.

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