



## POST OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

### THORACIC AND LUMBAR FUSION

#### What to expect:

Plan to be in the hospital for approximately 2-3 days. While in the hospital physical therapy and occupational therapy will work with you. A **back brace** should have been provided to you. Wear the brace when you are walking. It is for support and a reminder to refrain from bending, lifting, and twisting. Remove the brace for showering, when sitting comfortably in a chair, and for sleeping. Please keep bandage from the hospital in place for **2 more days** after being discharged. There will be small adhesive strips covering the incision, under bandage, which should stay in place until you are seen in the office at 2 week post-operative appointment. If your incision has staples instead of sutures, the same instructions apply.

#### DO NOT TAKE ANTI-INFLAMMATORY MEDICATIONS FOR 2 MONTHS AFTER SURGERY

These include Ibuprofen, Advil, Aleve, Naproxen, Diclofenac, etc. These medications **inhibit** bone healing. You may resume 81mg of Aspirin 3 days after surgery if this is already prescribed to you. Tylenol (Acetaminophen) is ok.

#### Have realistic expectations.

Expect incisional/back **pain** for 1-2 months post-operatively. You will be given a prescription for pain medication. Please notify the office at least 48 hours before you run out of medication so we can refill it. Also note, we **will not** continue to refill pain medication **beyond 90 days** after your surgery. **Recovery from fusions take time. Be patient and persistent with your healing.** You will likely have additional intermittent leg symptoms such as cramping, burning, tingling. There are medications for this and we will be happy to provide them to you. Muscle weakness or numbness may take up to 12 months to improve. Sometimes these symptoms may be permanent depending on the severity prior to surgery.

\*If you are being seen by pain management and are prescribed pain medication by them, you will need to make them aware of surgery so they can provide you with medication after.

#### Driving

Plan to have a driver for the first 3 weeks. You may resume driving after that time provided you are no longer taking pain medications and do not have significant leg weakness.

## **Physical Therapy**

Outpatient physical therapy begins **6-8 weeks** after surgery and the referral will be made at the 2 week post-operative appointment. The back brace may be removed for physical therapy. It is recommended to walk frequently, at least 6-8 times daily after fusion surgery. A stationary bike may be used after 3 weeks. No high impact activity for 4 months after surgery. Examples include golfing, pickle ball, horseback riding, motorcycle riding, etc. The first month weight limit is 10lbs, months 2-4 up to 25lbs. After 4 months weight and activity limit level is as tolerated.

\*Some patients may receive an external bone growth stimulator device to wear to accelerate the fusion process. This should be worn as directed by the manufacturer.

\*Returning to work is determined by your occupation, level of pain, function post-operatively, and restrictions outlined above.

### **NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IMMEDIATELY**

If you are experiencing fever and/or chills (above 101 degrees), increased pain, weakness, sudden loss of bowel/bladder function, increased redness or swelling around the incision, or drainage from the incision site.