Post-Operative Instructions: Posterior Lumbar Fusion

Follow-up appointments:

2 weeks 6 weeks 3 months
6 months 1 year 2 years

Discharge:

4-5 days

Staple/Stitch Removal:

At the first post-op visit (approximately 1-2 weeks).

Medications:

Pain medications and muscle relaxants will be prescribed on an individual basis.
Prescriptions will be filled during office hours only. Please allow 72 hours for requests to be processed.
No anti-inflammatories for a minimum of 3 months post-op.
Resume home medications per discharge instructions.

Physical Therapy:

In the hospital, this will begin on post-operative day 1.
As an outpatient, this may be prescribed approximately 6 weeks post-op.
A home exercise program may also be prescribed.

Cardiovascular Exercise:

Walk at least 30 minutes per day (does not need to be all at once) at the time of discharge.
Walking is the most important activity. Do as much as is comfortable.
From 2 weeks through 6 weeks following surgery, you should be able to increase your activity to normal.

Brace:

Should be worn when out of bed for longer than 10 minutes.
May sleep out of brace.
May shower without brace starting at 2 weeks post-op.

Driving:

None for 4-6 weeks post-operatively.
No sitting in one position in the car for longer than 45 minutes- get out and stretch if the ride is longer than this.
No driving while using narcotic pain medications.

Sleeping:

Use a pillow between the knees and lying on your side, or a pillow below the knees and lying on your back.

Showering:

You may begin showering 72 hours following surgery.
Do not soak the wound and keep it dry.
Change the dressing after showering, while leaving the steri strips in place.
Do not scrub incision site.
No baths, walk-in shower only.

Lifting:

No lifting over 10 lbs for 6 weeks. This may be longer depending on progress of fusion seen on x-ray.
No bending of the waist and no reaching to the ground.

Housework:

Light duties only.
Avoid pushing and pulling.
No bending over.

Sexual Activity:

Wait until 6-8 weeks post-op, once pain has subsided.
Use comfortable positions.