

# LUMBAR MICRODISCECTOMY

**PLEASE DO NOT TAKE ANY NON-STEROIDAL ANTI-INFLAMMATORY DRUGS (NSAIDs like Advil, Ibuprofen, Motrin, etc) OR ASPIRIN PRODUCTS FOR 7-10 DAYS BEFORE SURGERY.** These medications can increase bleeding during surgery. If you absolutely need to be on these medications until the date of surgery, check with **your surgeon**.

## **Your Spine Problem:**

Discs can be thought of as the “shock absorbers” or “cushions” between the vertebral bodies (bones) in the spine. The disc is made up of a fibrous, tough, outer ring (the annulus) surrounding a central core of gelatinous, soft material (the nucleus). If the annulus tears, the nucleus can then extrude through the hole in the annulus and place pressure on the nerve roots. (It is like what would happen if a jelly doughnut is crushed – the jelly will leak out through the side of the doughnut). This is what is called a “herniated disc.” The pressure on the nerve roots caused by the herniated disc can result in pain, weakness, or numbness/ tingling of the buttocks and lower extremities.

## **Description of Surgery:**

The surgery (lumbar microdiscectomy) is done to relieve the pressure on the nerves and help treat your symptoms.

After making a small incision over the area of the disc herniation in the lower back, your surgeon will remove the portion of the disc that is creating pressure on the nerve roots. Some additional loose disc material is also removed, but the entire disc is NOT removed because doing so is unnecessary. The goal of the operation is to remove the portions of the disc material contributing to the leg pain.

## **Going Home:**

Most patients go home on the same day of surgery, or occasionally an overnight stay is needed.

You can go home when: 1) your pain is controlled by oral pain pills; AND 2) you can eat and drink enough to sustain yourself (don't worry -- most people will not feel like eating and drinking too much after surgery, and that is ok); AND 3) you are able to get out of bed and walk around; AND 4) you can urinate on your own.

## **GEORGETOWN ORTHOPAEDIC SPINE SURGERY**

### **LUMBAR MICRODISCECTOMY -POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS**

#### **Wound Care**

- Keep your incision clean and dry.
- There are no stitches to remove, unless you have been told otherwise. All of the stitches are “inside.”
- Remove your dressing on day 2 after surgery. If the wound is dry, no further dressings are needed and the incision can be left open to air. If there is some drainage, the wound can be covered with a clean dressing as needed.
- You may shower when the wound has been clean and dry for 24 hours (usually 3-5 days after surgery). However, do not soak the wound in a bathtub or pool. Gently clean your wound – do not scrub it vigorously until it is completely healed.
- If you have them, let the Steri-strips (the tape on your incision) fall off themselves. If some are still there by the end of two weeks, you may peel them off.
- Do NOT put any ointments or antibacterial solutions over the incision or Steri-strips.
- If you notice any drainage, redness, swelling, or increased pain at the incision, call the office.

#### **Activity**

- Walking is the best activity. Walk as much as you like. It is good for you and will help you recover more quickly.
- Gentle movements of your lower back are inevitable and allowed, however, AVOID the BLTs: Bending, Lifting, Twisting of your lower back. You may exercise your arms and legs with light weights if desired as soon as you feel like it -- as long as those activities do not cause you to perform BLTs on your lower back.
- Do not try to do too much too early. Use your common sense. Again, walking is the best activity, and we encourage you to walk.

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SPINE SURGERY**

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-POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS**

**Driving**

- Do not drive a car until your surgeon allows and you are off of narcotic pain medication. This can be up to 2-4 weeks.
- Riding home in a car after you are discharged from the hospital is permitted. Limit the amount of time you spend riding in a car especially after surgery. After about 6 weeks, longer drives are allowed—stop occasionally to get out of the car and stretch. *Please follow any prescription warnings regarding driving, etc*

**Medications/Pain control**

- You can expect to have pain after surgery and medications will be prescribed to help relieve your pain. **PLEASE NOTE: Certain pain medications cannot be refilled by phone (i.e. duragesic, Morphine, Oxycontin, Percocet, Roxicet).** If you need a refill prescription, someone must come to Georgetown to pick up a prescription or it can be mailed to you. Mailed prescriptions may take several days to reach you. **If you call a day or two before you run out of your prescription, it will not reach you in time.**
- You could be switched to something else less intense than in the first few days after surgery and most of these meds can be phoned into your pharmacy.
- Pain medications are helpful around the time of surgery, but they can cause problems if taken for too long. The goal is to try to get you off of the medications by 3-4 weeks or earlier, if possible. Some people may need medications for longer than 3-4 weeks, and that's ok. But try to wean yourself off of them if you can.
- When you find that your pain is really mild, try taking plain **extra strength Tylenol** instead.
- **Do not take anti-inflammatories (advil, ibuprofen, naprosyn etc...) for 7 days after surgery.** You may take them at that time if desired.
- **If you were on a baby aspirin prior to surgery, you may generally resume that 2 weeks after surgery.**
- **If you were on a blood thinner (like Coumadin/ Lovenox/ Heparin products/ Plavix), check with your surgeon as to when that may be resumed after surgery.**

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**Constipation**

- The pain medicines may tend to make you somewhat constipated. Feel free to take any over the counter laxatives if you need to.
- High fiber foods and sufficient water/fluid intake are necessary.
- Please call the office if you are having difficulties even with these measures.

**Diet**

- Eat whatever you like. You may not feel like eating too much for a few days, and that's ok. Foods high in fiber (fruits, vegetables) are good in that they can help reduce constipation.
- Drink plenty of fluids.

**Follow up**

- If you have not already been given a postop follow up appointment, call your surgeon's secretary within the first few days after you get home. Tell her that you had surgery and need a follow up appointment.

**Questions**

- Feel free to call your surgeon's office with any questions
- If you are having an emergency, call the Spine Center at 202-444-8766 or go to the emergency room.