

GEORGETOWN ORTHOPAEDIC SPINE SURGERY

Six Weeks After Surgery

- Activity, especially walking around your home is encouraged. Try to do so at least six times daily.
- Activity should be in increments; for the first few weeks you should have at least six 15-20 minute rest periods during the day. Daytime naps are discouraged. The rest periods are not intended for sleep.
- Do not do heavy housework, such as bed making, vacuuming or laundry.
- If using stairs is necessary, go slowly and use the handrail.
- Do not twist, bend, or lift anything over 10 lbs. If you return to a sedentary job, you must abide by these restrictions. A letter can be faxed from our office stating these restrictions.
- No special exercises are necessary. Continue the abdominal and leg isometrics you were doing in the hospital.
- A physical therapist may be ordered for one to two visits once you are home from the hospital only to check the safety of your environment/living quarters. The therapist is not authorized to add additional exercises.
- An increased intake of water, six (6) to eight (8) glasses per day, will help clear your body of anesthetics and excess pain medication, and will increase the ease of bowel movements.
- With the use of narcotic medications, simple constipation is common. Increasing your intake of fiber with a daily supplement such as Metamucil is often helpful. Avoid extended use of stimulant laxatives.

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- Avoid sitting in chairs and on sofas that are low to the ground and avoid sleeping on a mattress with the height not equal to that of your mid thigh. This will make transfer in and out of bed easier.
- For discectomy patients, try not to sit longer than 15 - 30 minutes during a two (2)-hour period. Shorten those periods if soreness develops. This soreness is generally muscular in origin, and can often be helped with alternating local application of heat or ice.
- If you have had a lumbar fusion, wait until after the first post-operative office visit (at six weeks) before having any sexual activity. Otherwise, you may resume normal activity after two weeks.
- Do not drive until after we have seen you at your first post-operative visit, unless otherwise approved by your physician. Riding in the car is okay unless otherwise directed.
- Spine fusion patients cannot smoke for 6 months after surgery. You must also avoid nicotine products (smokeless tobacco, gum, patches) and avoid exposure to smoke from other smokers.
- REMEMBER, spine fusion patients are to avoid the use of NSAIDs (arthritis medication) for at least three (3) months after surgery. Consult your physician prior to resuming these medications.
- Braces or corsets are to be worn at all times when out of bed, unless showering. At your first post-operative visit, you will be given further instructions. If you have a halo, halo pins must be cleaned twice daily with one-half (1/2) strength Hydrogen Peroxide and water using cotton swabs.

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- If your surgery includes the use of spinal implants (rods, plates, screws, etc.) be sure to inform any physician planning other surgery for you in the first six (6) months. This includes any dental surgery or deep dental cleaning. We suggest that your physician or dentist use the American Heart Association guidelines for antibiotic prophylaxis.
- A physician is always on call to assist with any emergency after hours, holidays or weekends. Please call **202-444-8766**