

# **Lumbar Discectomy**

## **Brief description of the procedure**

Posterior lumbar discectomy is a surgical procedure performed to remove a herniated or degenerative disc in the lower spine.

## **Disorders it treats**

Neurological disorders and pain caused by disc Herniations (HNP) and Degenerative Disc Disease (DDD).

## **Possible Post-Op findings**

Most patients are able to go home the same day or early the next day after surgery. Before patients go home, Physical Therapists work with patients and instruct them on proper techniques of getting in and out of bed and walking independently. Patients are instructed to avoid bending at the waist, lifting (more than five pounds), and twisting in the early postoperative period (first 2-4 weeks) to avoid a strain injury or recurrent disc injury. Patients should try to avoid sitting in the same position for more than 45-60 minutes in the first few weeks after surgery. After sitting for 45-60 minutes, patients should get up and stretch or walk for a little bit, then sit down again if desired.

## **Factors influencing recovery**

Slower healing rate caused by i.e. diabetic, smoker, old age, osteoporosis, obesity, and malnutrition.

## **Brace (Y/N)**

Occasionally, patients may be issued a small, soft lumbar corset that can provide additional lumbar support in the early postoperative period, if

## **How long:**

If needed 4 weeks

## **Driving restrictions (Y/N)**

Patients may begin driving when the pain level has decreased to a mild level, which usually is between 2-10 days after surgery. Patients should not drive while taking pain medicines (narcotics). When driving for the first time after surgery, patients should make it a short drive only and have someone come with them, in case the pain flares up and they need help driving back home. After patients feel comfortable with a short drive, they can begin driving longer distances alone.

## **Physical Therapy Needed?**

Yes

## **PT restrictions**

While in Physical Therapy, patients are instructed to avoid bending at the waist, lifting (more than five pounds), and twisting in the early postoperative period (first 2-4 weeks) to avoid a strain injury or recurrent disc injury.

## **PT objectives**

Physical Therapy will initially focus on reducing pain and increasing functional mobility while helping the patient return to their Prior Level Of Function (PLOF). The patient will also receive a CORE and an endurance/cardio training program to help strengthen the back.

## **PT Modalities**

Physical Therapy Modalities used may include US/E-stim but will mainly focus on strengthening the CORE muscle of the lumbar spine and restoring correct functional mobility.

## **Work/Hobby restrictions**

Patients may return to light work duties as early as 1-2 weeks after surgery, depending on when the surgical pain has subsided. Patients may return to heavy work and sports as early as 4-6 weeks after surgery, if the surgical pain has subsided and the back strength has returned appropriately with physical therapy. Prior to any return, the patient will be provided with a return to work instruction sheet.

## **When to call your surgeon**

If your temperature exceeds 101° F, or if the incision begins to separate or show signs of infection, such as redness, swelling, pain, or drainage. If your swallowing problems interfere with your ability to breathe or drink water.

**Follow up with surgeon**

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Patients will return for a follow-up visit to the Surgeon approximately 8-10 days after surgery. The incision will be inspected and one stitch will be removed. Patients will be given a prescription to begin physical therapy for back exercises, to start 3-4 weeks after the surgery. Medications will be refilled if necessary.

## **Outcomes**

The results of micro-discectomy surgery in the treatment of a painful, herniated disc are generally excellent. Numerous research studies in medical journals demonstrate greater than 90-96% good or excellent results from microdiscectomy surgery. Most patients are noted to have a rapid improvement of their pain and return to normal function