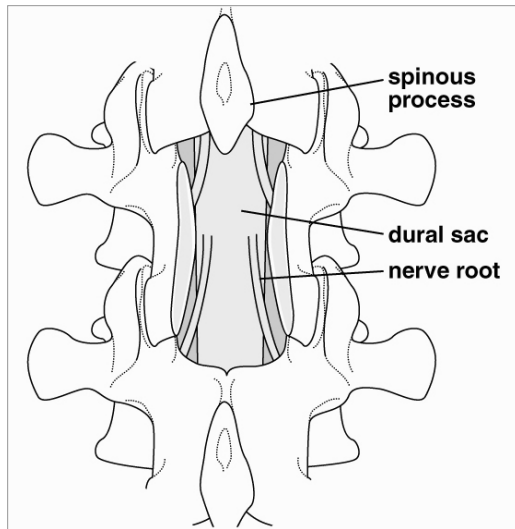


Lumbar Decompressive Laminectomy

A lumbar laminectomy is a back surgery that relieves pressure off the lumbar and sacral nerve roots. This handout will help you plan and prepare for this surgery.

Because of too much bone growth in the lumbar area of the spine, these nerve roots no longer have the room they need.



This may cause:

- Back or leg pain
- Trouble walking long distances
- Leg numbness or tingling

The surgery takes bone off the sac of nerve roots, giving them the room they need.

Getting Ready for Surgery

Refer to your booklet "Having Surgery at UW Hospital" for more instructions.

Preventing Constipation

Please start taking a stool softener two days **before** surgery. Take it with at least 8 ounces of water. This will prevent constipation caused by pain medicine. Do **not** take any fiber or stool softener on the morning of surgery.

Smoking

Avoid using nicotine before and after surgery. It delays wound and bone healing and can increase risks while under anesthesia. Your doctor may test for nicotine before surgery.

If you would like help quitting, talk with your doctor before surgery, or call the Quit Line at 1-800-784-8669.

Urination

Tell your doctor if you are having any trouble with urination. They may want to start a medicine before surgery to help you urinate.

Going Home

You should be able to go home the day after surgery. It is helpful to have a friend or family member spend at least 2-5 days with you when you return home. If you are unsafe to return home, you may need go to a rehab or skilled nursing facility.

Work

Check with your doctor before going back to work. If you need short term disability or FMLA paperwork filled out, please fax to our nurses at **(608) 662-3054**.

Medicine

You should not take any non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicines until approved by your doctor. Some examples include ibuprofen, naproxen aspirin, or Celebrex®. These will slow healing.

Pain

Your pain should improve after surgery. All pain medicines should be taken with food and at least 8 ounces of water. To help decrease pain in your back:

- Change positions often
- Use heat or ice (covered with a cloth) on your lower back for 20 minutes per hour
- Take pain medicines as prescribed

Activity

- Do **not** lift more than 10 pounds until we tell you it is okay
- Do **not** lie on your stomach
- **No** pushing or pulling
- **No** bending or twisting
- Sit for only short amounts of time for the first 2 weeks

Brace

We will let you know if you will need a brace after surgery. If you do need a brace, we will give you instructions for wearing it.

We will teach your family member how to put the brace on and take it off. Some braces, you will not be able to put your brace on by yourself. You should not lie on your stomach. You can use pillows for support.

Constipation

Take the stool softener twice a day while you are taking narcotic pain pills. If you do not have a bowel movement within two days or beyond your normal routine, take Milk of Magnesia® until you have a bowel

movement. You may eat prunes or drink prune juice instead of taking Milk of Magnesia®. Drink many 8-ounce glasses of water or juice daily so that your body has enough fluids.

Wound Care

Your incision may be closed with stitches, metal staples, plastic strips of tape called Steri-Strips, or Dermabond skin glue. Follow the instructions in your discharge packet for incision care.

Once the incision is healed, use sunscreen for the next year to prevent the incision turning dark in color.

When to Call

Call the clinic if you notice:

- Increased redness, swelling, or any drainage
- Increased pain that does not go away with pain medicine
- Fever greater than 100° F for two readings taken four hours apart
- New weakness
- Concerns with your incision

Who to Call

Neurosurgery Clinic
Monday to Friday, 8 am – 5 pm
(608) 915-0900

After hours, the number will be answered by the paging operator. You will need to ask for the doctor who is on call for your doctor.

The toll-free number is **1-800-323-8942**.