

### Description of Procedure

There are many techniques used to fuse the spine. Your surgeon will choose the type that he/she feels will bring the most relief while reducing the risks associated with surgery (as much as possible). Although fusion techniques differ, the goal remains the same, to stabilize the spine, reducing pain down the legs and/ or lower back by creating room for the nerve, so that the nerve is not rubbed. Material is placed to eventually "fuse" (meaning grow bone from one bone to the next, so there is no longer a joint that can move) the bones, stabilizing the spine and keeping you pain free. As the bone heals from one bone to the next, a cast or support system is needed. To accomplish this, a framework of screws and rods are used to support and provide a stable environment, promoting bone healing. It takes approximately one year for a fusion to solidify. Due to this, please remember to follow your restrictions and use common sense.

**BACK PAIN** Back pain is expected after surgery, typically residing in the lower back and can seem to radiate into the hips. This is normal post-operative pain.

**LEG PAIN** It is common to experience temporary increase, or the same level of intensity, pain down one or both of your legs. This can be due to us "cleaning off" your nerves, swelling, or just remnants of nerve irritation from prior to surgery. Please inform us however, if your pain is gradually worsening.

### Appointments

Please see your primary care physician one week after surgery to have the incision examined. We would like to see you at Inspired Spine one month after surgery. These appointments are occasionally made for you prior to discharge from the hospital by the nursing staff. Please ask the nursing staff or contact our office to confirm these appointments. You should have plain X-rays whenever you come back to clinic for visits.

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### Restrictions

Do not bend or twist spine. Remember this acronym "BLT". That is, you should not Bend, Lift over 8 pounds, or Twist. We would like you to keep your back (hips to shoulders) as straight as possible. Do not lift over 8 lbs. first two weeks, then not over 16 lbs. after that. We will clarify further restrictions at your follow up appointment.

### Medication Refills

The medications prescribed at discharge may not last until your one-month follow up appointment. Please call Inspired Spine at (612) 474-4993 for all refill requests. Please leave a detailed message including the name of the medication, dose and which pharmacy you would like to use. All medications will be monitored through the prescription drug monitoring program. Due to this monitoring, prescriptions will only be completed weekly on Tuesdays, as we require ample time for medication requests to be received and approved. Prescriptions can be picked up at our Alexandria location or mailed directly to the pharmacy. Since many prescriptions are for controlled substances, please expect drug screening to occur at random intervals.

## Incision Care

Depending on the type of surgery, you may have staples, sutures, steri strips, or likely a combination of these to help keep your incision closed post-operatively. Steri strips are small stickers placed over the wound; please allow these to remain in place until they fall off on their own.

Staples should be taken out within 10-14 days after surgery either with your primary care doctor or at our facility. Often a tan bandage is placed over the incision site after surgery. This is left on for 6 or 7 days, then should be removed. After this has been removed, gauze or bandages are usually not necessary. We ask that you leave the incision site open to air unless you find that there is increased sweat or moisture in the area, if this occurs dress the area 2 times per day until the environment is no longer moist or the 3 weeks have passed since surgery. Remember that dark and moist areas promote bacterial growth.

## Signs of Infection

You or a significant other/caregiver should monitor your incision for signs of infection. Signs of infection include; redness, swelling, increased warmth to the touch, discharge from the wound, and a body temperature over 100.5 F. If any signs of infection do appear, please contact our office and/ or your primary care provider.

## Should I wear a brace?

Use brace when needed and ambulation as soon as possible, PT can help with that. Early PT will increase activity in an appropriate way.

## When can I go back to work?

Most patients go back to work with restrictions 4-8 weeks after surgery. If you have a more physically demanding job, this may need to be extended. In this case, your capability to return to work can be discussed at your one-month visit.

## Delayed Healing

Fluctuation in the amount of pain you may experience is normal. This is especially common 1-2 weeks after surgery related to increase swelling at the surgical site.

Certain things can delay your healing, hinder your surgery from being successful, and/or increase your risk of requiring another surgery. These include smoking and/or tobacco use, diabetes, poor general health, advanced age, and/or obesity. Although some risks cannot be avoided, it is important to control what you can for the best possible outcome. If you would like to quit smoking, your primary care provider can help.

## Can I bathe?

It is safe for the incision to get wet while taking a shower, but avoid any direct pressure from the shower head and do not scrub the area. Lightly pat the site dry with a clean towel when finished. Avoid submerging your wound by soaking in the bathtub, as this will increase your risk of infection at the incision site. Please wait around 3 weeks for the incision wound to heal before submerging the area while taking baths.

## When can I drive?

Once you are off all narcotic pain medication, and have regained full control of your extremities you should be able to safely operate your vehicle.

## Questions

**Call (952) 405-6714**



inspired spine