

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 amount of relief while reducing the risk of the surgery as much as possible. Although fusion techniques differ, the goal remains the same, stabilize the spine and reduce pain down the arms and/or upper back and neck. This is done by making room for the nerve so that the nerve is not rubbed, and by placing material to eventually "fuse" (meaning grow bone from one bone to the next, so there is no longer a joint that can move) the bones to stabilize the spine and hopefully keep you pain free. As the bone heals from one bone to the next, just like how a cast would be used to splint a broken arm, a cast or support system is needed here too. To accomplish this, a framework of screws and rods are used to support and provide a stable environment promoting bone healing. It takes roughly a year for a fusion to solidify, due to this please remember to follow your restrictions and use common sense.

**NECK/
SHOULDER
PAIN** Headaches, neck pain, pain near and around your shoulder blades and into your arms are common post-operative pain/symptoms after a neck surgery. These symptoms are temporary almost always, but can take quite some time to resolve.

**ARM
PAIN** It is not uncommon to experience temporary increased or the same level of intensity of pain down one or both of your arms or shoulders. 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 worsens.

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.

These appointments are occasionally made for you prior to discharge from the hospital by the nursing staff. Please ask the hospital nursing staff or contact our office to confirm these appointments. You can reach Inspired Spine at (952) 405-9760 to set up an appointment with our Patient Access Representative team.

Restrictions

Do not bend or twist your neck. 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.

Incision Care

The incision site was sewed under the skin, then stapled or sewn again to prevent the wound from re-opening. The staple or sutures that you can see are usually removed between 2-3 weeks after surgery. You should monitor the wound for signs of infection (see signs of infection). The wound is usually left open to air. If you find that you are extremely sweaty in the region, please place antibiotic ointment over the incision and cover with clean gauze. This gauze and reapplication of the ointment should be done twice a day for the first two weeks.

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.

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