

Activities

The return to normal strength and activity is gradual but progressive. There is no advantage to trying to rush the rate of recovery but it is very important that you remain active on a daily basis. Alternate periods of activity with rest period.

Exercise is limited to walking for the first **3 months** and then activity may be increased at the discretion of your surgeon. It is important that you avoid activities which require you to bend your back and/or lift.

- If any activity causes numbness, weakness or increased pain, especially down your leg, stop the activity for one day and start again the next day.
- If the numbness, weakness or increased pain persists, stop all activities and talk with your doctor or physiotherapist.
- It is normal to feel some discomfort at the incision site and/or some low back pain. You may also feel some muscle spasms or cramping. Check with your nurse or doctor about appropriate medications to relieve pain and/or spasms.
- You may also use an ice pack (e.g. a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel) for 15 to 20 minutes over the painful areas. Your pain/discomfort should subside within 20 to 30 minutes. Tell your nurse, doctor or physiotherapist if your pain persists.

- Alternate activities and/or resting positions to prevent stiffness.
- Avoid sitting for long periods. Always use a firm straight chair that supports your back.
- Do not bathe in a tub for 3 months. When showering, make sure you stand on a non slip bath mat, or use a bath seat.
- Avoid lifting heavy objects, children, laundry, carrying heavy groceries and vacuuming for three months.
- Avoid leaning over the basin when shaving, brushing teeth etc. Bend your knees, and keep your back straight or sit down.
- Sit down to put on your socks and shoes. Equipment, such as a long handled reacher or raised toilet seat, may be recommended by an occupational therapist.
- Use a firm mattress for resting/sleeping. Lie on your side or back with pillows for support as shown. Do not lie on your stomach.
- Avoid positions that cause back/leg pain during sexual activity.
- Discuss your return to work, driving and sporting activities with your doctor.

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Activities following Lumbar Spine Fusion

Lumbar Fusion

Part of your spine has been immobilized by surgery. Your surgeon will discuss with you the method used. If your surgeon recommends that you wear a brace, the physiotherapist will liaise with the orthotist to provide the appropriate type.

If you have a brace wear it all the time, except when lying flat in bed.

Do not wear it in the shower without plastic protection.

Your surgeon will tell you when to stop using the brace.

In Bed - Keep the bed flat

- When you are on your back, place one small pillow under your head.
- Bend your knees and support them with a pillow or bolster.



- When on your side, place a small pillow under your head and one between your knees.
- Keep your knees bent and your back straight.



- When changing positions, avoid twisting.
- Remember to keep your shoulders in line with your hips and leg.

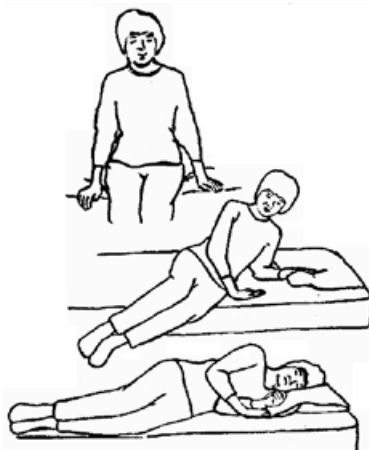
Getting Out of Bed

If you have a brace, put it on before you get up.

- Log roll onto your side, with your knees bent up.
- Drop your feet off the side of the bed and push up with your hand/forearm.
- Avoid twisting your back.
- Sit briefly on the edge of the bed before standing up straight.

Getting Into Bed

- Sit on the edge of the bed.
- Lie down on your side. Stay on your side or log roll onto your back.
- Remove your brace in bed.



Note: If you are tall, raise the height of the bed. This will make getting into and out of bed easier.

Walking

Walking is your most important form of exercise after your surgery. Initially walking on flat ground is recommended.

Before your surgery, you may have had to lean or twist to one side to avoid pain.

After your surgery, it is important to correct this position. Try to keep yourself as straight as you can.

If you have a brace, Always wear it when walking.

Concentrate on walking with a good posture. Flat shoes are recommended. Pace yourself with frequent rests by lying down on the bed. Remember to minimize sitting, as this puts strain on your low back.

Static Abdominals

- Lie on your back with your hips and knees bent and feet on the bed.
- Place your fingertips on each side of your lower abdomen just above your pelvis and below your rib cage.
- Pull in your stomach and keep your upper body relaxed. Do not hold your breath.



Hold position for 5 seconds.
Repeat 10 times.
Do 2-3 sessions per day.