

# Spine & Brain

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## Postop Instructions for our Back Surgery Patients

Thank you for letting us provide your surgical care. Taking care of yourself after surgery is a key part of your recovery. This information is for our patients who have undergone back surgery. This information sheet is a general guideline to postoperative care, and we may provide you different or additional instructions as needed for you.

### ACTIVITY

Avoid lifting more than 10 pounds for the first six weeks after surgery. You should also avoid activities that involve significant and repetitive lifting, bending, or twisting apart from usual activities of daily living. After the six weeks the restrictions will be modified by your surgeon. Ten pounds is approximately the weight of a gallon of milk.

Walking is the best form of exercise after surgery. If your condition permits, we recommend walking several times a day. Start by walking in your home, and then progress to walking outside, or in a public place. If you would like to use a treadmill, place the incline setting to zero. Use your judgment as to how fast or far to walk and increase your pace and distance gradually.

We do not advise driving until all pain medication has been stopped and a vehicle can be safely controlled. You may be given a neck collar or back brace which can impair your ability to look around you. If you feel unsafe to drive have someone else drive for you. Use your best judgment in this regard.

### WOUND CARE

If your incision is covered by a dressing, this should be changed daily for the first three days following surgery. Afterwards you may leave the wound uncovered. A few small spots of blood on the dressing are normal. Some swelling, redness, and pain is common. This will normally go away as the wound heals.

Your wound is closed by absorbable sutures. A layer of glue or steri strips may be placed over the incision for additional support. Let the glue or strips fall off on their own. The glue looks like blue plastic, and the steri strips look like small Band-aids. If we used sutures, we will usually remove those at the first postoperative visit.

When you shower have the wound uncovered and let the water bounce off your skin. Afterwards blot the wound dry with a towel. Do not scrub the wound with a washcloth or towel. Do not submerge the wound under water (no hot tubs, no baths) until instructed by us. Do not apply ointments, creams, gels, or lotions to the incision since this can cause irritation or infection.

### PAIN MANAGEMENT

Some pain can be expected after surgery, and you may be given pain medication for this at discharge. Take your pain medication as directed. Do not take pain medications with alcohol or with illicit drugs.

Pain medication can cause side effects such as nausea, vomiting, and especially constipation. To minimize the likelihood of constipation, take the pain medications only when you need them for pain relief, and try to stay adequately hydrated

and include foods with fiber in your diet, or fiber supplements. If there is an over-the-counter medication you have taken in the past for constipation, please feel free to try this. If your symptoms do not improve, you can consider talking to your local pharmacist for advice for other over the counter treatments, or your primary care provider, or contact us.

If you need a refill, please contact our office during regular business hours. You may also request refills by using the patient portal at [mackayspineandbraingroup.com](http://mackayspineandbraingroup.com). Contact us 24-48 hours before you run out of your medication because this will give us adequate time to provide you with a refill. Prescription requests cannot be filled on the weekend. If a request is made on a Friday, this may not be available until the following week.

## BACK BRACES

Depending upon your individual circumstances, you may be prescribed a corset or a back brace.

We will sometimes provide you with a corset or brace for you to wear only as needed for your comfort, and you can decide when to wear the corset or brace or not based on whether it helps you with your back.

We will sometimes provide you with a corset or brace specifically to immobilize your spine and we will want you to wear this all or nearly all the time. Ask us which of the instructions below you should follow.

No corset or brace.

Corset for comfort: A corset is generally made of cloth and plastic, or metal support strips and closes in front with Velcro fasteners. You can put on and take off the corset while sitting or lying down. You do not have to wear this corset while in bed, in the shower, or when you're up at night to go the bathroom, and we may instruct you to wear this just when you find it helps with your back pain.

Back brace for immobilization: You should put on and take off the brace while laying down. You will need to wear this brace whenever you are up. We may instruct you to shower with the brace on. After the shower lay down to take the brace off and dry it. Showering at night before bed may be best, as the back brace can be left off to dry overnight while you lay flat to sleep.

## FOLLOW-UP CARE

You will be seen in our clinic 10-14 days after surgery. Our office usually makes this appointment for you when we schedule your surgery, but if you leave the hospital without one, please contact our office to schedule this.

If your appointment is already scheduled, please call the office to verify the time, date, and location since we have two office locations.

Contact us if you have other questions, or concerns. We would rather know how you are doing, and try to answer your questions or concerns, than have you be uncertain or worried about how you are doing.

If you experience emergent or urgent conditions call 911. Otherwise, please contact us at 715-843-1000 or through the patient portal at [spineandbraingroup.com](http://spineandbraingroup.com). Our office hours are Monday-Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. If you were to call after hours, you will automatically be connected to our paging service

We hope this information is helpful and thank you once again for allowing us to provide your surgical care.