

What To Expect From Low Back Surgery

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Orthopedic

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Our 3rd edition in the “What to Expect” series focuses on low back (lumbar) spine surgery, including what you should know before, during, and after the procedure. If you or someone you know is considering or preparing for lumbar spine surgery, we’re here to provide support and guidance on the road to recovery.

Understanding Low Back Surgery

Low back or lumbar spine surgery is typically recommended for those with conditions like herniated discs, spinal stenosis, or degenerative disc disease when conservative treatments (like physical therapy, medications, or injections) don’t provide adequate relief. The goal of surgery is to reduce pain, restore function, and improve quality of life.

Common Types of Lumbar Spine Surgery:

- Discectomy/Microdiscectomy
 - Removal of part or all of a damaged disc to relieve pressure on nerves.
- Spinal Fusion
 - Two or more vertebrae are fused together to provide stability, often after disc removal or for severe spinal instability.
- Laminectomy
 - Removal of part of the vertebra (lamina) to relieve pressure on the spinal cord or nerves, commonly done for spinal stenosis.
- Artificial Disc Replacement
 - A disc is removed and replaced with a synthetic disc to maintain motion in the spine.

Before Surgery: Preparing For Success

Proper preparation can help set you up for a smoother surgery and recovery.

Here’s what to expect:

- Pre-surgical Physical Therapy: Strengthening your core muscles, improving posture, and increasing thoracic and hip mobility can help optimize your surgery outcomes and recovery. Physical therapy before surgery may also teach you techniques for

managing pain and improving movement.

- **Clearance and Testing:** Your surgeon may order various tests (e.g., X-rays, MRIs) and perform a physical exam to assess your condition and ensure you're a good candidate for surgery. You'll also be asked about your medical history and any medications you take.
- **Pre-operative Instructions:** You'll receive specific instructions about when to stop eating and drinking before surgery, which medications to stop taking, and any other necessary preparations.

During Surgery: What Happens On The Day

On the day of surgery, you'll be admitted to the hospital or surgical center.

Here's a general overview:

- **Anesthesia:** You'll be given general anesthesia so you won't feel pain during the procedure. In some cases, regional anesthesia (epidural or spinal block) may be used instead.
- **Surgical Procedure:** The surgery itself typically lasts between 1 to 4 hours, depending on the type of procedure performed. Your surgeon will make small incisions or a larger incision (depending on the type of surgery) to access the spine. In a discectomy or laminectomy, damaged tissues are removed. In spinal fusion, bone grafts or metal screws may be used to fuse vertebrae together.
- **Post-operative Care:** You'll be monitored in a recovery area after surgery to ensure you wake up safely from anesthesia. Pain control, antibiotics, and fluids will be managed as needed.

After Surgery: The Road To Recovery

After lumbar spine surgery, the recovery process can vary, but here's what to generally expect:

- **Hospital Stay:** Most patients stay in the hospital for 1-3 days depending on the procedure and how you are recovering. Some may be discharged the same day for minimally invasive procedures. Pain management is crucial during this time, and your healthcare team will adjust medications to keep you comfortable.
- **Initial Recovery Phase (1-6 weeks):** For the first few weeks after surgery, you'll focus on rest and pain management. You may

need to use a back brace or other assistive devices for support. Walking is encouraged to promote circulation and prevent blood clots.

- **Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation:** Physical therapy usually begins a few weeks post-surgery, again depending on the procedure performed. Our goal is to help you decrease pain, regain strength, flexibility, and function. Therapy will focus on:
 - Core muscle activation & strengthening to support the spine.
 - Posture correction to promote spinal health.
 - Functional mobility to ensure you can return to normal daily activities.
 - Stretching and range of motion exercises to maintain flexibility and reduce stiffness.
- **Long-term Recovery (6 weeks and beyond):** As you progress, your physical therapist will introduce more advanced exercises to help you return to activities you enjoy. Full recovery can take up to a year, but most patients start feeling better within 6 weeks to 3 months.
- **Return to Work and Activities:** The timing for returning to work depends on your job and the type of surgery. For sedentary jobs, you may be able to return in 2-4 weeks depending on the procedure. For more physically demanding jobs, your surgeon and physical therapist will help you plan a gradual return to work.

Key Steps For A Successful Recovery

1. **Follow Your Surgeon's Instructions:** Adhere to post-surgery care instructions, including pain management and activity restrictions.
2. **Engage in Physical Therapy:** Participate fully in your prescribed physical therapy program to ensure the best recovery outcome. Regular exercise will help you regain strength, stability, and function.
3. **Pace Yourself:** Don't rush the recovery process. It's important to give your body the time it needs to heal.
4. **Practice Proper Posture:** Be mindful of your posture during everyday activities to protect your spine.
5. **Listen to Your Body:** If something doesn't feel right, don't hesitate to reach out to your healthcare team. Early intervention

is key to preventing complications.

We're Here For You Every Step Of The Way!

Lumbar spine surgery can be life-changing, offering long-term relief from pain and improved function. We understand that surgery can feel overwhelming, but remember, you don't have to go through it alone. At LifeMotion, our team of expert physical therapists will be with you every step of the way to guide you toward a successful recovery. If you have any questions or are interested in pre-surgical or post-surgical physical therapy, please don't hesitate to [contact us](#). We're here to help!

Thank you for trusting us with your care.

Schedule An Appointment



Clinic News:

Welcome new team members Dr. Kylie Volk, DPT and Dr. Meagan Konkol, DPT!

(Dr. Konkol is measuring, Dr. Volk is performing lumbar flexion)

The Balance Center has added two new physical therapists to the crew! We always strive to have patients stay with the same 1-2 therapists, and new team members allow more personalized care. Both PTs bring fresh perspectives and skills to enhance the healing experience. They are both currently taking new patients!



Congratulations Dr. Garrett Field, DPT!

Garrett embarked on his journey to earn his doctorate in physical therapy in 2022 after originally practicing as a Physical Therapist Assistant with LifeMotion. He participated in a bridge program through the University of Texas Medical Branch to transition from physical therapist assistant to physical therapist. After a rigorous didactic and clinical schedule, he has officially passed his boards exam to become a licensed physical therapist, way to go! Dr. Field has

a special interest in sports related injuries from all types of athletes and weekend warrior types, as well as general orthopedics. He is currently taking new patients!

Space Expansion

We are also excited to announce a new space for the pelvic team's clientele! This office gives patients privacy and a calm environment to make the most of the healing process. One patient has already dubbed the space "Barbie's Dream House" for the pink foam roller and timers that grace the treatment area. Dr. Bojko and Dr. Bowman are experts in a variety of pelvic health and orthopedic diagnoses, they are ready to partner with you for your healthiest 2025!





A Message From Ryan

With the arrival of spring, growth is in the air! At LifeMotion, we believe physical therapy is one of the best investments in health, and we are committed to expanding access to high-quality care. As our practice continues to grow, we know scheduling has been a bit trickier lately—but we have great news! We're expanding our space for our pelvic health team, welcoming new providers Dr. Volk and Dr. Konkol, and celebrating Dr. Field's transition from PTA to DPT.

And the growth doesn't stop there! This June, we're excited to welcome two more skilled practitioners, Dr. Lily Vincent, DPT and Dr. Briana Hendrix, DPT. Their expertise will further enhance our care for patients with orthopedic, pelvic health and balance needs. Stay tuned for more details on how they can support your health journey in 2025 and beyond.

We've also made some tech upgrades to improve your experience. Our new phone system now supports two-way texting for easier communication, and we're testing digital check-ins via your phone and kiosks at the front desk. Give it a try next time you visit—we value your time and are always working to make your interactions with LifeMotion as seamless as possible.

We're excited for what's ahead in 2025 and beyond, and none of this would be possible without you. Thank you for being part of the LifeMotion family and for trusting us with your care.

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