Types of surgery

**Discectomy** is the removal of part of the disc which is pressing on a nerve. The pressure may cause pain, weakness, or loss of feeling in the leg.

**Laminectomy** is the removal of part or all of the lamina (arch formed by the vertebrae) to relieve pressure on a nerve or the spinal cord.

**Spinal fusion** is done to stabilize a part of the spine. There are various types of spinal fusion. Commonly, a bone graft is used to make a bridge over the affected disc to prevent extra movement. The graft will be taken from your hip bone or the bone bank.
What can I expect?
You may be admitted on the day of surgery.

After surgery
- You may be admitted to the Neurosurgery Unit (Unit 7.3). The nurses will take your temperature, blood pressure and pulse every 4 hours. They will help you turn in bed during the night.
- You can expect to be in the hospital for 1-4 days depending on the type of surgery.
• You will have an intravenous (IV) for the first 12-24 hours, until you are drinking well.
• A nurse will help you stand and walk on the evening of your surgery if appropriate.
• You may be able to sit up in a chair the day after surgery. Do not sit on low or soft furniture.
• Walk as soon as possible and bit by bit increase how far you go. Do not overdo it the first day after surgery.
• The physiotherapist will talk with you about how active you should be.
• Tell the nurse if you are having any pain, spasm, or drainage leaking from your incision (cut).
• Let the nurses know if you have any trouble with urinating (peeing) or bowel movements (pooping).
At home

• You might not be as active as usual when you first go home. You might need help with things like cooking, grocery shopping, and housework.

• Do not lift for 6 weeks. If you must lift, do not lift anything over 10 pounds. When bending over, you must bend your knees and avoid twisting motions.

• Avoid heavy house work and yard work.

• Do not lie on your stomach. Put pillows between your knees for comfort when lying on your side.

• Your doctor will let you know when you can return to work.

• Talk about driving limitations with your doctor.

• Be sure to attend your follow-up appointments. If you have to change them, reschedule but do not cancel.

• Be sure that you have your follow-up X-ray appointment the day of your clinic appointment.
Care of your incision

• You may shower once your dressing has been taken off and there is no drainage.

• Avoid direct water pressure on the incision site. Pat it dry carefully, do not rub it.

• When bathing, keep the level of water below your incision until it is well healed.

• Your incision may be closed with a special kind of glue (Dermabond®). This will gradually come off on its own. Do not pick at it or try to peel it off.

• You will be told if you have staples or stitches that need to be removed by your family doctor. Dissolvable stitches will dissolve on their own.

• There may be small pieces of tape over your incision site. They will come off on their own. Do not pull them off.
Pain

• It is normal to have pain after surgery.
• If you are still using opioid pain medications at the time of going home, you may be given a prescription for these.
• You should be able to start taking less pain medication over the next few days. Never drink alcohol while taking pain medication.
• If you had a spinal fusion, you should stop using NSAID medications (like ibuprofen, Celebrex®, Naprosyn®) for about 3 months.

When should I call my doctor?
Call your doctor if:
• You notice any signs of infection, such as fever (higher than 37.5°C or 98.6°F) or if your incision is red, tender, swollen, leaking or becomes more painful.
• Have a lot more pain after surgery.

When should I go directly to the hospital?
• If you have calf pain or swelling in your legs, chest pain, or difficulty breathing, go to the nearest Emergency Department right away.

If you have any questions, please ask.
We are here to help you.
Looking for more health information?
Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.
For more information go to http://library.novascotia.ca

Nova Scotia Health Authority promotes a smoke-free, vape-free, and scent-free environment.
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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.