

Lumbar Laminectomy: Before Your Surgery

What is a lumbar laminectomy?

A lumbar laminectomy is surgery to ease pressure on the spinal cord and/or nerves of the lower spine. This is also called decompression surgery. The doctor makes a cut in the lower back. This cut is called an incision. Then the doctor takes out pieces of bone that are squeezing the spinal cord and nerves. The doctor may also take out other tissues.

Many people have less pain soon after surgery. But your back may feel stiff and sore for a few months.

Depending on the type of surgery you have, and your health, you may go home the same day. Or you may stay in the hospital for 1 or 2 days. You will likely return to work in 2 to 4 weeks. But if your job requires physical labor, it may take 4 to 8 weeks.

How do you prepare for surgery?

Surgery can be stressful. This information will help you understand what you can expect. And it will help you safely prepare for surgery.



Preparing for surgery

- Be sure you have someone to take you home. Anesthesia and pain medicine will make it unsafe for you to drive or get home on your own.
- Understand exactly what surgery is planned, along with the risks, benefits, and other options.
- If you take a medicine that prevents blood clots, your doctor may tell you to stop taking it before your surgery. Or your doctor may tell you to keep taking it. (These medicines include aspirin and other blood thinners.) Make sure that you understand exactly what your doctor wants you to do.
- Tell your doctor ALL the medicines, vitamins, supplements, and herbal remedies you take. Some may increase the risk of problems during your surgery. Your doctor will tell you if you should stop taking any of them before the surgery and how soon to do it.
- Make sure your doctor and the hospital have a copy of your advance directive. If you don't have one, you may want to prepare one. It lets others know your health care wishes. It's a good thing to have before any type of surgery or procedure.

What happens on the day of surgery?



- Follow the instructions exactly about when to stop eating and drinking. If you don't, your surgery may be canceled. If your doctor has told you to take your medicines on the day of surgery, take them with only a sip of water.
- Take a bath or shower before you come in for your surgery. Do not apply lotions, perfumes, deodorants, or nail polish.
- Do not shave the surgical site yourself.

- Take off all jewelry and piercings. And take out contact lenses, if you wear them.

At the hospital or surgery center



- Bring a picture ID.
- The area for surgery is often marked to make sure there are no errors.
- You will be kept comfortable and safe by your anesthesia provider. You will be asleep during the surgery.
- The surgery will take about 1 to 1½ hours. If a spinal fusion is done at the same time, surgery will last 2 to 4 hours.

When should you call your doctor?



- You have questions or concerns.
- You don't understand how to prepare for your surgery.
- You become ill before the surgery (such as fever, flu, or a cold).
- You need to reschedule or have changed your mind about having the surgery.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

Enter **N842** in the search box to learn more about "**Lumbar Laminectomy: Before Your Surgery**".

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