Thoracic spine surgery

This leaflet explains what to expect when you are in hospital and during the recovery period.

The name of your operation is ..........................................................

You should expect to be in hospital........................................ nights.

Admission date is .................................................................

Discharge date is .................................................................

You will need to stop the following medication

....................................................... for .........................days before the surgery.
The day of admission

On the day of admission at 12.00 hrs you need to telephone **01865 231526** to check that a bed is available for you. You will be given a time to come in. Your operation will usually be planned for the next day.

Some people may be asked to come in on the day of their operation. In this case we will tell you when you need to stop eating and drinking and what time to arrive on the day of surgery.

We will always do our best to make sure you have your operation as planned. However, we do have emergency admissions and sometimes a planned operation may have to be postponed.

Arriving at hospital

Please come to the Neurosciences Ward on level 2 in the West Wing of the John Radcliffe Hospital. Parking is available under and around the West Wing building.

In accordance with our Privacy and Dignity policy we will always try give you a bed in a bay with other people of the same sex and to make sure you have access to the appropriate shower and toilet facilities. During your hospital stay we may need to move you to another bed or ward. In rare circumstances we may have to put men and women in the same bay. In this case we will make every effort to move you to a single sex bay as soon as possible.

With your permission we will list your name and bed number on a poster board so that all our staff know where you are on the ward.

Visiting hours on the ward are from 3pm to 8.30pm. This allows patients to have time to rest. We request that only **2 people** visit
at any one time. Flowers are no longer allowed on the wards for the purposes of health and safety and infection control.

The nurse will explain the menu system and how to order food.

You may require some extra tests and your blood pressure, pulse and temperature will be checked. You will be told approximately what time your operation will be and when to stop eating and drinking.

The day of your operation

The nurse will tell you when to get ready for theatre. You will be asked to wear a theatre gown and special stockings to reduce the risk of a blood clot (deep vein thrombosis) developing in your leg.

The Surgeon will see you before your operation to explain the operation and any risks involved and to answer any questions you may have. There are two approaches for thoracic surgery. You will either have a wound on your back or a wound on the right side of your chest.

The anaesthetist will also see you to talk to you about the anaesthetic. You will then be asked to sign the consent form for the operation to go ahead. When it’s time the nurse will take you down to the anaesthetic room, where you will be prepared for your operation.
After the operation

You will wake up in the recovery room. There will be a drip in the back of your hand and you may have a fine tube in your wound, connected to a drain. If you have had the operation through the side of your chest you will have two drains in place which will inflate your lung.

You will be taken back to the ward and we will monitor your pulse, blood pressure and wound regularly. We will offer you regular pain relief. It is important that you tell a nurse if you are feeling sick or if you have pain so we can help make you comfortable. It is also important that you change your position in bed at least once every 2-3 hours; the nurses will help you if necessary.

When your condition is stable you will be allowed to get out of bed. The tubes will be removed over the next two to three days. (The wound drain in your back is normally removed the day after surgery. If you have drains in your side, they will remain in place for several days.) Be careful not to do too much. The next few days should be seen as an important part of the recovery process. A physiotherapist will see you and give you advice on exercises that you should do regularly. If you have a wound in your side it is important to do deep breathing exercises.

It is not unusual to experience some discomfort, tingling, numbness or pins and needles after your operation. We expect this to settle with time. If you have increased pain, pins and needles or any other new symptoms you should talk to one of the nurses or doctor, or with your GP if you are at home.
**Going home**

We ask you to be ready to leave hospital by 10am on the day you are due to go home. If it is not possible for you to be collected at 10am we will ask you to wait in the discharge lounge until you are collected. Please tell one of the nurses on the day of your admission if you think you will not be collected by 10am.

By the time you leave hospital we would expect you to be able to care for yourself, walk up and down stairs and sit in a car for the journey home. It may be sensible to make arrangements for help with shopping, housework, gardening and caring for small children.

**Getting back to normal**

The length of time that you need to take off work depends on the nature of your job. As a guide you are likely to need about 8 weeks off work. If possible try and return to work part-time to start with to allow yourself time to recover. We can give you a sick certificate to cover the time you need to take off work.

Once you are at home you can gradually increase your activity as you feel able, taking care not to do too much too soon. Allow for periods of rest. Pain killers can be constipating so we encourage you to eat food that will help to keep your bowels working well. Drink plenty of water. Moving around will help to reduce the risk of DVT (blood clots in your legs).
Wound care

The wound on your back or side should be clean and dry. If your wound becomes red, swollen, sore or leaks you should see your GP as soon as possible. In most cases the stitches can be removed after 10-14 days by a nurse at your GP’s surgery. Your nurse will give you a letter for the Practice Nurse – you will need to make an appointment with them on discharge from hospital.

For most patients recovery takes about six to eight weeks, although in some cases it may take up to three months. An out-patient follow-up appointment will be sent to you for approximately 12 weeks after your operation.

Questions or concerns

If you have any questions that you would like to discuss before you come into hospital or after you have left hospital you can contact one of the Nurse Practitioners on:

**Direct line 01865 234975**

Or you can contact the hospital switchboard on 01865 741166 and ask to bleep one of the Neurosurgical Nurse Practitioners.
If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call 01865 221473 or email PALSJR@orh.nhs.uk