

Rehabilitation after lumbar discectomy, microdiscectomy and decompressive laminectomy

Information for patients



You have just had surgery on your lumbar spine. Below are some common questions with answers, and some exercises for you to start doing. Research has shown that the quicker you return to normal activity, the better the outcome of your operation. You may have other questions, which any of the staff will be happy to answer.

Will I have pain after surgery?

You may have some pain after surgery. We will give you painkillers to help with this if you need them. Returning to normal activity and getting your back moving helps with your recovery and can help reduce your pain.

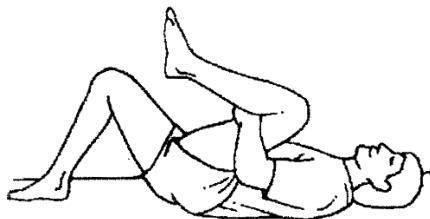
When can I start exercising?

You should start exercising as soon as you can, normally the day after surgery. Below are some exercises to get you started. We recommend you do each exercise 5 times three times a day.

1. **Alternate knees to chest:**

Lying with your knees bent and your feet on the floor:

Lift one knee towards your chest. Place your hands behind the knee and draw it into your chest.

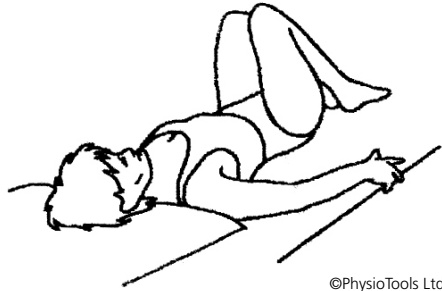


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2. **Crook lying, legs side to side:**

Lying on your back with knees together and bent.

Slowly roll your knees from side to side, keeping your upper trunk still.



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3. **Sitting pelvic tilt:**

Sit on a stool and practise good posture:

First let your back drop and get rounded, then use your back muscles to straighten your back and arch it (not too much). Hold for approximately 1-2 minutes.



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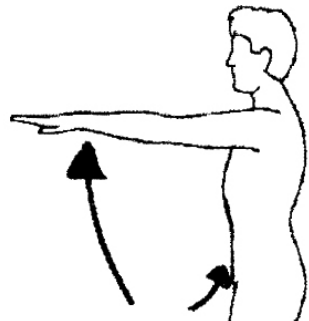
4. **Transversus (tummy) in standing:**

Pelvic core stability exercise in standing

Start position:

Standing straight by a high table with the back relaxed in a neutral position and the pelvis and shoulders directly over your feet.

Do not let the pelvis sway forward or backwards or let the trunk lean.



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Action:

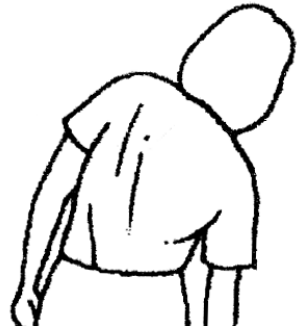
Draw in the lower tummy muscle by imagining you are putting on a tight pair of trousers. With your arm at about shoulder height, gently push down on the table surface and hold for a count of ten. Keep the back stable.

Do not allow twisting of the trunk or pelvis.

5. **Left and right side bend**

Standing.

Bend sideways at the waist.



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How often should I do my exercises?

You should try and do the above exercises 5 times each, 3 times a day. Quality is more important than quantity.

When can I resume normal activities?

You should keep moving after your surgery and return to full activities as soon as possible. When you return home, as well as doing the exercises above, you should gradually increase your fitness and activity levels. At first this may be a little uncomfortable, but as you gradually increase your activities it will become easier. The surgeons say you should avoid lifting anything more than 10 kg for 4-6 weeks after your surgery.

When can I get back to sport?

Contact sports such as football and rugby should be avoided at first because other people might bash into you. Generally, you can get back to them after 10 weeks. However, it is sensible to have started some type of exercise, such as walking, cycling or gentle gym work, before returning to contact sports. Jogging is OK after ten weeks, when again you should make a gradual return building up your time and distance over several weeks.

When can I go back to work?

Returning to work as quickly as possible is generally beneficial. As a guide, you are likely to need about 6 weeks off work. If you do a sedentary (mainly sitting down) job you may be back at your desk after about 4 weeks. If you do a more manual job, it may be around 8-12 weeks before you can go back.

You should aim for a gradual return to your previous duties at work. It may be a good idea to consider returning on part-time hours for a few days at first.

How much can I sit?

We advise that you avoid sitting for too long at first. Get up and walk around so you change position.

When can I start driving?

You can start driving again when you feel comfortable and confident enough to operate a vehicle and when you can perform an emergency stop. The surgeons generally recommend you avoid driving for a few days after surgery as the anaesthetic may slow your response time. If you have any noticeable leg weakness or persistent numbness in your leg or feet we advise you to delay going back to driving.

Key messages

- Remain mobile and return to full activities as soon as possible after surgery. This produces better relief of pain.
- Returning to work as quickly as possible is generally beneficial. It results in faster recovery and better clinical outcomes.

How to contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact:

Neurosciences Physiotherapy Department on **01865 234583**

If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221473**. When we receive your call we may transfer you to an interpreter. This can take some time, so please be patient.

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