

## **GENERAL POST OPERATIVE GUIDELINES ANTERIOR LUMBAR INTERBODY FUSION**

### **POST-OPERATIVE INFORMATION**

- The expected hospitalization period is 5 to 6 nights.
- For patients presenting with sciatica, we anticipate an improvement in these symptoms within the first day post surgery.
- Initially there will be some surgical site pain, which is manageable with oral analgesics (pain killers). This pain improves as the wound heals.
- You will be discharged from hospital when you are able to walk and move comfortably.
- We use self-absorbing stitches, which do not require future removal. The wound needs to be kept dry. You will be provided with water resistant dressings, so you can change your dressing if it gets wet.
- You need to have a follow-up appointment with Prof. van Gelder at 2 and 6 weeks post op and monthly thereafter for 3 to 4 months.

### **RECOVERY PERIOD (USUALLY 8-12 WEEKS FROM SURGERY DEPENDING ON AGE)**

- It takes 2 to 3 months for the bone graft to fuse.
- During the recovery period we expect light activity consisting of light exercise such as walking. The level of walking maybe graded up as tolerated. It is important to keep active.
- Be careful with bending and lifting: Do not bend excessively or beyond the point where your outstretched arms reach below your knees. Do not lift objects more than 5 kg.
- You cannot drive until you have received clearance from Prof van Gelder at the 2-week post op appointment. The reason for this is to ensure there are no neurological deficits that will place you or others at risk while driving.

All correspondence  
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#### **Consulting locations**

**Burwood** Suite 107 / 3 Railway Pde  
**Liverpool** Suite 106 / 161 Bigge St  
**Wahroonga** Adventist Hospital San Clinic  
Suite 402 / 185 Fox Valley Rd

## **RETURN TO WORK**

- Following your surgical procedure we recommend 8 weeks off work for recovery. Return to work is subject to clearance from Prof van Gelder. It will depend on the type of work you do and your clinical improvement.
- On returning to work you may require some initial modification of duties depending on the job description. For example avoid prolonged sitting and take frequent breaks for short walks.
- For some types of employment, realistic expectations will be set with the doctor prior to surgery.

## **GENERAL ADVICE**

- It is beneficial to have a consultation with a specialist spine physiotherapist who is familiar with spinal surgery. They can advise you on the types of activities and exercise and how to manage these during recovery. They can also provide education about spinal pain, alleviate anxiety about re-injury and assist you with return to as normal activity level as possible.
- One such practice is Sydney Spine Physiotherapy, which is co-located at the Sydney Spine Institute in Burwood. For other locations please consult our staff or your GP.
- Prof. van Gelder will advise when physiotherapy can start (usually around 4 weeks post surgery). A handful of fortnightly sessions (3 or 4) may be helpful.

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