



PREPARING FOR SPINE SURGERY

We at Connecticut Neck & Back Specialists recognize that preparing for spine surgery can be a stressful endeavor. Please know that our staff are well trained to handle any questions that may arise either before or after surgery. We believe that a successful outcome from your surgery starts with a thorough understanding of your spinal condition along with a realistic expectation of what you may encounter in the weeks to months following your surgery. The following represents a list of things you can do to optimize your outcome:

Weight Loss~ If you are overweight, you may want to take steps to safely lose weight prior to your surgery through healthy eating and exercise. Excess weight causes additional stress to the spine that can make post-operative healing more difficult and can cause more pain during the recovery process. If you have a lot of weight to lose, be sure to consult your doctor for supervision.

Exercise~ Exercise can help you prepare for surgery. Exercise also boosts your immune system and contributes to an overall sense of well-being. Almost everyone can safely adopt some form of activity prior to surgery to increase strength and stamina. Depending on your condition and the level of pain you experience, walking, swimming, water aerobics, or light weight-training exercises can be beneficial. A physical therapist may be helpful in designing an activity program that is right for you.

Smoking Cessation~ If you are a smoker, quitting this habit can be the single most important change that you make prior to surgery. Smoking significantly increases your chance of surgical complications. It compromises your immune system, can adversely affect you during the anesthesia process, and can contribute to lung difficulties such as pneumonia during your recovery. Studies show that fusion rates are much less successful among smokers. Recent studies have shown that smoking cessation starting on, or just prior to, the day of surgery has significant positive impact on achieving a solid fusion.

Perioperative Support~ You will need to identify a friend, family member, or support person to drive you to and from the hospital for your surgery. You may also need someone to stay with you at home for at least the first day or two after your surgery to assist you with personal care, meals, and necessary errands. Depending on your condition, the type of surgery, and your individual circumstances, you may need to arrange for professional home care for a longer period of time.

Preparing Your Home~ It is a good idea to prepare your home for your post-operative recovery needs. You may be temporarily restricted from bending, stooping, or heavy lifting. Place necessary objects such as your telephone, food, toiletries and medicine within easy reach. You may also want to rearrange your furniture so that you don't need to climb stairs, and remove rugs that might cause you to trip. Depending on your condition, you may need to obtain special equipment for walking and bathing as prescribed by your doctor, nurse or physical therapist.

Recovery Plans~ It is important that you have realistic expectations about your post-operative recovery. If you need to wear a brace after surgery, you may be fitted for it prior to your procedure. We will also discuss with

you how long you may be hospitalized; what temporary or long-term restrictions you may have after surgery, and when you may be able to return to work or other normal activities.

Consent Forms~ You will need to sign consent forms showing that you understand the proposed surgical procedure and that you agree to it. We will make sure that you understand your medical history, the type of surgical procedure suggested, the type of anesthesia we will use; the risks, benefits, and potential complications; and the expected plan for your hospitalization, post-operative pain management, rehabilitation and recovery.

Final Pre-Surgery Preparation~ In the final days leading up to your surgery, you will receive detailed instructions about your medication schedule, blood donations, and how to prepare for your admission to the hospital. These instructions vary depending on your individual circumstances.

Hospital Admission~ When you go to the hospital for your surgery, it is a good idea to wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothes and shoes that are easy to take on and off. If you will be staying overnight in the hospital, bring a small bag with underwear, nightwear, slippers or loafers, and personal toiletries. If you will be wearing a brace after surgery, you will need to be sure to bring the brace with you along with a cotton t-shirt to wear underneath. Leave your jewelry and watches at home, and remove your rings. When you arrive at the hospital, you will be asked to change into a hospital gown. Your visitors will be asked to wait in the waiting area. Medical staff will review your vital signs and start an IV prior to taking you into surgery.

Conclusion~ Although the prospect of surgery can be daunting, we are experienced in helping our patients through this process. If you have the time to prepare for your surgery physically and mentally, you will greatly enhance your overall sense of well-being and the outcome of your procedure. Be sure to listen to and follow our instructions so that you are ready for surgery, and don't hesitate to ask us if you have any questions.