Physical and Occupational Therapy after Spine Surgery

Preparation for your surgery
Agenda

- Pre-Operative Exercises
- What to Expect
- Post-Operative Plan
- Spinal Precautions
- Post-Discharge Plan
What to Expect
What to Expect from Physical and Occupational Therapy

Rehabilitation will evaluate you following your surgery. They will be looking at the following:

- Reviewing home layout and availability of caregivers
- Identifying any barriers to a safe discharge to home
- Physical therapy:
  - Getting out bed
  - Getting up from a chair
  - Walking and use of any assistive device
  - Stairs
  - Getting in and out of a car
  - Mobility and balance
- Occupational therapy:
  - Activities of daily living
  - Dressing, bathing, grooming, cooking, housework, etc.
After Surgery
Post-Operative Day #0

• With nursing or physical therapy
• Attempt activity with patient as pain, sedation allows
• Sit up or dangle legs at the edge of the bed
• Transfer to a chair
Post-Operative Day #1

• Out of bed to the chair
• Walk within the room
• Education regarding spinal precautions and log rolling
• Occupational therapy consultation, as appropriate
Post-Operative Day #2

• Go to the rehabilitation gym for therapy sessions
  – Via wheelchair transportation
• Increase walking distances
• Practice stairs
• Practice car transfer
• Continued education on spinal precautions
• Determine medical equipment needs and set up with provider
  – Rolling walker, cane
  – Bathroom, dressing supplies with OT
Your Hospital Room

• Use log rolling to get out of bed.
• Sit up in chair rather than in bed when possible.
  – Eating, reading, watching TV
• Use walker until you are steady on your feet and cleared by therapist.
Therapy Gym
Therapy Gym
Therapy Gym
Spinal Precautions
Precautions

• Therapists will emphasize “No BLT”
  – Bending
  – Lifting
  – Twisting
Bending

• Do not bend any further than you would with comfortable sitting

• Bend at your hips, keeping your back straight, when standing at counters
Lifting

• Do no lift anything greater than 10 pounds, until cleared by your surgeon
  – Approximate weights:
    • 1 gallon of milk ≈ 8.6 pounds
    • 12” stainless steel skillet ≈ 6 pounds
    • 2 liter bottle of soda/water ≈ 4.4 pounds

• Pack grocery bags light

• Use a rolling bag or cart; ask for help with loading/unloading

• Do not lift overhead
  – Place frequent used items at arms reach prior to surgery.
Twisting

- Move your feet instead of twisting at your waist
- Turn your hips and shoulders together
- Take short steps around turns
- Imagine rods connecting your shoulders and your hips so that your whole body turns together
  - Turn your whole body to look behind you
  - Log roll when getting out of bed
  - Turn full body when getting out of the car, rather than just swinging your legs out
Lifting and Carrying

Wrong: Avoid carrying objects that are held away from your body.

Right: Only carry light objects and always keep them close to your body.
Bending and Lifting

Wrong: Do not bend through the back if you need to lift something off of the floor.

Right: Kneeling or using the golfer’s lift, is a better option for reaching down to the floor.
Bending

Wrong: Avoid full bending in through the spine. Avoid a fully rounded out back to protect your surgery.

Right: Rather, bring your foot to your body to put on your shoes and socks. This will avoid excessive bending.
Getting out of Bed: Log Rolling

Roll onto your side
- Keep your knees together.
- Flatten your stomach muscles to keep your back from arching.
- Put your hands on the bed in front of you.

Raise your body
- Push your upper body off the bed as you swing your legs to the floor.
- Keeping your back straight, move your whole body as one unit. Don’t bend or twist at the waist.
- Let the weight of your legs help you move.

Stand up
- Lean forward from your hip and roll onto the balls of your feet.
- Flatten your stomach muscles to keep your back from arching.
- Using your arm and leg muscles, push yourself to a standing position.
Getting In and Out of the Car

Sit Down
• Back up to the car seat.
• Hold on to the side of the car or the dashboard for support.
• Lower yourself slowly onto the seat edge. Watch your head.

Bring your legs into the car
• Slide back to the center of the seat.
• Lift your legs one at a time into the car.
Proper Posture

• Keep your head, shoulders, and hips in line
• Chin slightly tucked
• Shoulders back, pull shoulder blades in
• Lightly draw abdominal muscles in
• Avoid slumping back
• Avoid sway back
• Keep your weight equal on both sides
Proper Sitting

• Do not sit for longer than 30 minutes.
• Keep your feet flat. Don’t cross your legs.
• Make sure your back and your legs are supported.
• Use a foot stool if needed.
• Support your arms.
• Avoid slouching or slumping.
• Avoid very soft or plush chairs and couches.
Sitting Down

- Follow these steps to sit down. Reverse them to get back up.
- Make sure the chair is behind you.
- Place one foot slightly behind the other.
- Tighten your stomach muscles. Bend forward from the hips, keeping your back straight.
- Hold the armrests or sides of the seat for support.
- Bend your knees. Use your leg muscles to lower yourself onto the seat.
- Scoot back in the seat until you are comfortable.
Sleeping Positions
On Your Back

• On your back
• Pillow for head
• Pillow supporting legs
Side-Lying

Right: Use a pillow between your knees.

Wrong: Avoid twisting the spine.
On Your Stomach

*If allowed by your surgeon*

- Support feet.
- Support your abdomen.
- Keep your head and neck in center.
Post-Discharge
Outpatient Therapy Following Discharge

• Outpatient physical therapist will do an evaluation of your status.
• Therapists will continue to progress your motion, mobility, balance, and strength—especially core strength.
• You will be provided with a home exercise program.
• Individualized goals will be set.
• Walking and cardiovascular exercises will be emphasized.
• You will have a goal to get up to 45 min of activity per day to keep your spine healthy.
Outpatient Therapy Gym at Saint Luke’s Hospital of Kansas City
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Questions?