



Dr R E Pope

Beneficence and Nonmaleficence
Neurosurgeon and Spine Surgeon

PHYSIOTHERAPY

POST SPINE SURGERY

Your physiotherapist will visit you the day after your surgery to teach you how to get out of bed and move around again. You will also be taught a basic exercise routine to help rehabilitate your back.

GETTING IN/OUT OF BED (VIA LOG ROLL)

- Lying on back, bend legs.
- Place arm across chest.
- Roll on to side in one movement.
- Bring legs over edge of bed.
- Use arms to push up into sitting.
- Always move as one unit and don't twist shoulders or hips.

PRECAUTIONS/RESTRICTIONS

There are several precautions you must adhere to in the **first four weeks** until review with your surgeon. At this time, ask when these precautions and restrictions are no longer required and return to previous activities is allowed. E.g. driving, golf, bowls, gardening etc

1. Avoid repetitive bending, twisting and sitting for longer than approximately 30 minute periods. Try to sit upright with a firm back support. The act of prolonged sitting, bending, heavy lifting and twisting does cause more stress on your back and can cause back and even leg pain. Dr Pope recommends a reclined/semi-reclined position or lying on a couch; however, strict bed rest is not required or recommended.
2. Driving is not recommended until formal review (usually 6 weeks). Following such an operation, you may find that your reaction times are slow because of pain, generalized fatigue, stress of surgery, and prescribed pain medication. As a passenger you may find it more comfortable in a reclined position or in the back seat. If you are planning to take long trips, please try to take interval breaks, every 45-60 minutes, getting out of the car light stretching and walking short distances.
3. You may take short walks inside or outside of your home. You may walk up and down stairs. You are to avoid any type of Spa-pool or baths until review by Dr Pope.
4. You are to avoid housework, yard work, shoveling, lifting more than a few kgs (especially up over your head) or any strenuous activity. Do not begin any exercise program or sports program until you are instructed to do so (usually 6 weeks). Do not bend over to pick objects up from the floor. Bend your knees, keeping your back straight as you reach down towards the ground
5. Smoking is a **major** risk factor for non-healing and mal-union of fusion if you underwent this procedure. Smoking impairs healing of bone and thus slows the rate of your recovery, possibly leading to suboptimal results. Smoking cessation will not only help you heal but will improve your general health.
6. Sports, especially full contact sports are obviously avoided until formal review and depending on the procedure undertaken. Usually 6-9 months post-op before taking up these activities fully.

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PHASE 2: WEEKS 5-14

Your physiotherapist will suggest how many exercises and how often you are to practice these at your review appointment in week 5.

Stretches

1. SINGLE KNEE TO CHEST

Pull one knee in to chest until a comfortable stretch is felt in the lower back and buttocks. Repeat opposite knee.

Hold _____ seconds. Repeat _____ times on each side. Do _____ sessions per day.

2. PRONE LYING: RESTING ON FOREARMS

Assume the position shown. Breathe out as you rest on your forearms to help the back relax.

Hold _____ seconds/minutes. Do _____ repetitions _____ times per day.

Strength

3. LOW ABDOMINAL EXERCISE

Lying on your back with the knees bent to a comfortable height, feet flat: flatten your back and tighten your stomach muscles. Maintain this pressure while you lift one foot off the floor, then lower it.

Hold _____ seconds. Do _____ times. Repeat _____ per day.

4. BRIDGING

Brace your trunk by flattening your back and tightening your stomach muscles.

Maintain this contraction while you lift your buttock off the floor, keeping the back straight and arms relaxed on the floor.

Hold _____ seconds. Repeat _____ times. Do _____ per day.

5. PRONE SINGLE ARM RAISE

Lying on your stomach if comfortable to do so, raise one arm from floor with the elbow straight.

Hold _____ seconds. Repeat _____ times. Do _____ sessions per day.

Endurance

6. Aim to be walking 40 - 60 minutes per day or every second day.

7. Optional: swimming for 30 minutes 2-3 times weekly.

Exercising in water may seem quite easy at the time. **REMEMBER** that you are actually working your spine more than you think! You may feel some stiffness and soreness the next day when you first begin, so be careful to increase the intensity of this activity slowly.

Begin by walking in the water – forwards, backwards, sideways. Gradually introduce kicking using a kickboard, swimming freestyle and/or backstroke, as you feel comfortable. Avoid breast-stroke and butterfly.

References:

Jull GA and Richardson CA (2000): Motor control problems in patients with spinal pain: A new direction for therapeutic exercise. *Journal of Manipulative Physical Therapy* 23:2, 115-117.