

# LUMBAR DISCECTOMY POST-OPERATIVE REHABILITATION GUIDELINE

- No driving while on narcotics
- No brace
- No scar mobilization for 3 months
- No NSAIDs for 1 week
- No jogging/running/horseback riding for 6 months
- Education booklet prior to surgery (include smoking cessation)
- Progress as appropriate...all patients progress at different rates

## **Phase 1 (POD 1 - 3 weeks post-op)**

### **Focus:**

- Mobilization, correctly performing ADLs
  - Putting shoes on, correctly picking items off ground, etc
- Ambulation, endurance, posture
- Correct usage of assistive device

## **Phase 2 (3-6 weeks post-op)**

- Begin regimented OP PT (2-3/week) for recommended 6-8 weeks (12-24 visits)
  - ODI + FABQ at initial eval
    - FABQ also at 6th visit
  - Education on precautions, anatomy/biomechanics, surgery, prognosis

### **Goals:**

- Reduce pain (0-2/10 at rest)
- Maintain erect posture throughout 80% of the day
  - Encourage position changes, limiting sitting
  - Appropriate body mechanics
- Reestablish neuromuscular control of lumbar stabilizers
- Volitional contraction of TA, lumbar multifidi for 5 x 5 sec
- Improve LE strength/mobility
- Demonstrate appropriate functional movement within precautions
- Continue progressive walking program
- Independent with HEP
- Progress exercises once patient demonstrates proper form/technique and control of neutral spine with each repetition

### **Focus:**

- Ambulation/endurance
  - Progress toward discontinuing assistive devices
  - Initiate aerobic conditioning
    - treadmill/track walking, recumbent bike
- Strengthening (legs, core, back)
  - Use light weights/pully system/resistance bands (note weight restriction for 3 mos)
  - maintain neutral spine – 2 x 10,15,20 (progress c resistance bands):
    - wall squats



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- supine abdominal crunch (not a sit-up)
- hooklying bent knee fall outs
- sidelying hip abduction/clamshells
- prone hip extension
- Flexibility, mobility
  - Soft tissue mobilization for hypertonic paraspinal muscles
  - Bilateral LE stretching 3 x 30-45 seconds
    - gastroc/soleus, hamstrings, hip flexor
  - Encourage movement
    - Avoid sitting for prolonged periods of time (30-45 mins)
- Balance, POSTURE, gait training
  - Neuromuscular activation of lumbar stabilizers (multifidi, TA)
    - Abdominal isometrics, drawing in maneuver for TA, VC for volitional multifidus contraction
    - Diaphragmatic breathing
  - Maintain neutral spine (pelvic tilt, lumbar lordosis)
    - Pelvic Tilts (all directions)
  - Stabilization/functional activities
    - Lumbar stabilization 2x10 → 15 → 20
      - Hook-lying pelvic neutral (hip at 45°): marches → SL heel slide → leg lift c knee ext.
      - Dead bug: alt UE → alt. LE → alt. opposite UE/LE
      - Bridges
      - Bird Dog: alt. UE → alt. LE → alt. opposite UE/LE
      - Pelvic tilts
    - Functional movements
      - Bend with knees to reach towards floor
      - Shift weight, avoid twisting
      - Lift slow and close to body
      - Bring feet/leg up to self when donning/doffing socks, shoes
      - Scoot to front of chair before standing
- + / - pool therapy
- Control pain, inflammation
  - Grade I-II joint mobilizations above/below surgical site for pain
  - Ice modalities for pain/inflammation
- Facilitate healing of incision (watch for redness, drainage, swelling, etc)

**Suggested components for daily HEP:**

- o Pain management - PRN
- o Stretches as appropriate
- o LE strengthening with neutral spine
- o Postural awareness/pelvic tilts
- o Abdominal hollowing/abdominal isometrics (in isolation and with extremity movement)
- o **Progressive walking program** – walk as tolerated, wear pedometer, track # of steps
  - 1 mi in 20 mins at 6 weeks

**Avoid:**

- Lifting, push/pulling (yardwork, chores) >20 lbs up to 3 months post-op
- Stationary bike, rower
- Deep flexion/extension at hips
- Lumbar hyperextension
- Combination movements (bending, lifting, twisting at waist...BLTs)



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**Other Considerations/Precautions:**

- Consult doctor for return to driving, returning to work
  - Return to work may be shorter for sedentary jobs
- Sitting
  - No longer than 30-45 mins
  - Back support, with feet flat, knees level with hips
- Avoid lotion/cream, submerging incision underwater until fully healed

**Phase 3 (6 weeks - 3 months post-op)****Goals:**

- Return to baseline standing/walking duration and distance
- Discharge visual biofeedback after 3-4 weeks
- Maintenance of trunk co-contraction throughout therapeutic activities
- Volitional contraction of TA and lumbar multifidi for 7 x 7 sec
- Maintenance of neutral spine during therapy interventions
- Improve trunk and LE strength
- Achieve functional ROM
- Demonstrate proper ergonomics and work simulation
- Continue progressive walking program
- 0-2/10 pain with activity
- Independent with HEP

**Focus:**

- Progress strength, endurance
  - Aerobic conditioning
    - Walking, treadmill
  - Muscle strength of lumbar stabilizers (multifidi, TA)
    - Abdominal isometrics/hollowing
    - Dynamic, completing with trunk-co contraction (2-3x x 10 → 15 → 20)
      - Hook-lying pelvic neutral (hip at 90°): marches → SL heel slide → leg lift c knee ext.
      - sitting or standing pelvic neutral: alt. UE → marching → marching c alt. UE
      - SL bridges or DL c marches
      - prone and side-lying planks (on knees: 5-10 sec)
        - Can begin 2 months post-op
      - standing isometric core resistance c Thera band
      - standing pelvic neutral: shoulder ext, hor. abd., row, D1/D2 c Thera band (bil → uni)
    - LE strengthening with neutral spine (progress with resistance band, 2-3x 10 → 15 → 20)
      - Stability ball wall squats
      - Standing hip abduction, extension
      - Side stepping
      - Lunges (SP, FP)
      - SL deadlift
- Control pain/inflammation
- Trunk and LE mobility/flexibility
  - Dynamic BLE stretching (gastroc/soleus, hamstrings, hip flexor)
  - Lumbar spine ROM (flex/extension)



- Quadruped rocking, cat/camel, prayer stretch
- Balance
  - DL → DL, EO → EC, no UE movement, stable → unstable surface
- Begin light ergonomics and simulated work activities
- Pain modulation
  - Grade I-II joint mobilizations above/below surgical site
  - ice/modalities

**Suggested components for daily HEP:**

- o Stretches and ROM
- o Trunk and LE strengthening/stabilization
- o **Progressive walking program**
  - 2 mi in 30 mins at 9 weeks
  - 3 mi in 45 mins at 12 weeks

**Avoid:**

- Lifting >20 lbs up to 3 months post-op

**Phase 4 (3+ months post-op)**

- Can do scar mobilization at 3 months (Cross friction massage)
- ODI + FABQ at discharge
- Can begin gradual progression back to run/jog/horseback ride at 6 months
- Released to do most anything
  - Gradual progression with lifting
    - Extreme caution when lifting from ground...use good body mechanics, kneel down
    - Always avoid lifting with combo movements that require deep fwd hip flexion/bending/twisting...increases risk of re-herniation.
  - Gradual progression with strengthening

**Goals:**

- Volitional contraction of TA and lumbar multifidi for 10 x 10 sec
- 0/10 pain with all or most activities
- Able to tolerate work simulation activities without increase in symptoms
- Verbally understands the return to work progression
- Complete progressive walking program
- Independent with HEP
- Achieve *Oswestry Disability Index* MCID

**Focus:**

- Muscle endurance of lumbar stabilizers (multifidi and TA)
- Trunk and LE strengthening - 2-4x 10 → 15 → 20
  - Stabilization exercises
    - bridges on Dynadisc or BOSU
    - upward/downward chops (cable column)
    - prone and side-lying planks (off knees: 5-10 sec)
    - walkouts/rollouts on stability ball
    - cable column resistance walking (close to body → away from body or OH)
    - prone superman's
  - LE strengthening with neutral spine 2-4x 10 → 15 → 20 c progressive resistance or on unstable surface
    - squats (DL → SL)



- SL deadlift on Dynadisc or BOSU
- lateral band walks
- lunges (add TP)
- stability ball H/S curl
- Full duty work simulation
- High level balance activities
  - Rebounder toss, medicine ball rotations on stability ball, etc
- Aerobic conditioning
  - walking/treadmill

**Suggested components for daily HEP:**

- o Maintenance therapy including lumbar stabilization exercises, trunk and LE strength/mobility, proper lifting and functional movement, etc.
- o **Continue progressive walking program**

**Recommendations for return to work based on job type:**

<b>Work Type:</b>	<b>Return to Work:</b>
Sedentary (<10lbs) or Light (frequently 10lbs, occasionally 20lbs)	After 6-8 weeks, with limited sitting duration for 30 min at a time for 6 weeks
Moderate (frequently 20lbs, occasionally 50lbs)	At 8-10 weeks, patient may return to light duty if available – no lifting >10lbs  At 12-14 weeks, return to full duty – no lifting >25lbs
Heavy (frequently 50lbs, occasionally 100lbs)	At 8-10 weeks, patient may return to light duty if available – no lifting >10lbs  At 12-14 weeks, moderate duty – no lifting >25lbs  At 20-22 weeks, return full duty



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