

Thoracic and Lumbar Fusion Activity Guidelines

4 weeks – 3 months after surgery

Spinal fusion precautions:

- No bending or twisting at the waist
- No hip flexion more than 90 degrees or crossing the legs
- No lifting more than 15lbs
- No NSAIDs

Activities and exercises:

- Continue walking, may now use a treadmill at a comfortable walking pace
 - If already doing a walking regimen, increase gradually with a goal of 50-100% more at 3 months
 - If not doing a walking regimen, begin one with a 10-15-minute walk and increase to 30 minutes by 3 months
- Water walking if incision is healed and approved by our office (no swimming for exercise yet)
- Recumbent stationary bike
- Stair stepper / stair mill
- Light arm strengthening
 - Biceps, triceps (laying in bed), wrist flexion/extension, deltoids
 - No overhead lifting, no benches/chest presses, no arching/twisting back
 - Lifting limit of 15lbs still applies

Tips and advice:

- All of the above activities must be done with the spine precautions in mind
- Add new activities gradually, no more than 1 per week
 - If it hurts, stop this activity and wait a few weeks before trying it again
 - You must use steps to get in/out of pools, no pool ladders
 - Shorter, more frequent periods of activity and exercise are better tolerated than one long period

Please send a MyChart message or call with any questions: 410-539-3434

Thoracic and Lumbar Fusion Activity Guidelines

3 – 6 months after surgery

Spinal fusion precautions:

- Ok to start gentle bending or twisting at the waist
- No hip flexion more than 90 degrees or crossing the legs
- No lifting more than 20lbs
- Limit NSAIDs

Activities and exercises:

- All previously recommended exercises
- Light/modified water aerobics (no swimming for exercise yet)
- Treadmill on an incline, brisk walking pace
- Easy hiking (no heavy backpacks)
- Upper & lower extremity strength training with resistance bands (maintain precautions) or up to 20lb weights
- Light/easy fishing

Tips and advice:

- All of the above activities must be done with the spine precautions in mind
- Add new activities gradually, no more than 1 per week
 - If it hurts, stop this activity and wait a few weeks before trying it again
 - You must use steps to get in/out of pools, no pool ladders
 - Shorter, more frequent periods of activity and exercise are better tolerated than one long period

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Thoracic and Lumbar Fusion Activity Guidelines

6 – 12 months after surgery

Spinal fusion precautions:

- Ok to continue gentle bending or twisting at the waist
- No hip flexion more than 90 degrees or crossing the legs
- No lifting more than 30lbs
- Limit NSAIDs

Activities and exercises:

- All previously recommended exercises
- Swimming with a kickboard (no spinal rotation or arching), snorkeling
- Light jogging
- Use of weight machines for upper & lower extremities up to 30lbs, no overhead lifting or spine-stressing exercises, must maintain precautions
- Moderate hiking, no heavy backpacks
- Hunting with cross bows and firearms with minimal kick
- Cross country skiing
- Free throws, hitting tennis balls, kicking soccer ball, playing catch (must maintain precautions)

Tips and advice:

- All of the above activities must be done with the spine precautions in mind
- Add new activities gradually, no more than 1 per week
 - If it hurts, stop this activity and wait a few weeks before trying it again
 - You must use steps to get in/out of pools, no pool ladders
 - Shorter, more frequent periods of activity and exercise are better tolerated than one long period
 - Gradually increase activity to at least 30 minutes of cardiovascular exercise 5-6 days/week and strength training 2-3 days/week

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Thoracic and Lumbar Fusion Activity Guidelines

1 year or more after surgery

Life-long recommendations:

- Be nice to your back!** The more forces you put on it, the more likely you are to wear out adjacent levels
- Be careful with bending or twisting at the waist, don't do it if you don't need to
- Good body mechanics: squat down, lift with your legs, carry things close to your body, etc.
- Normal household lifting is ok, but avoid heavy lifting (50lbs+)

Activities and exercises:

- No set restrictions, but use common sense and increase gradually
- Running
- Cycling
- Skiing
- Swimming
- Elliptical
- Golf
- Hunting
- Fishing
- Water sports (canoeing, kayaking)
- Contact sports
- Archery
- Modified yoga/Pilates
- Yard work
- Household chores

Tips and advice:

- Add new activities gradually, no more than 1 per week
- If it hurts, stop this activity and wait a few weeks before trying it again
- Gradually increase activity to at least 30 minutes of cardiovascular exercise 5-6 days/week and strength training 2-3 days/week
- No restrictions with medications, may use NSAIDs, bisphosphonates, etc. now

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