

Movement And Exercises After Lumbar Surgery



Interior Health
Every person matters

Patient Information

www.interiorhealth.ca

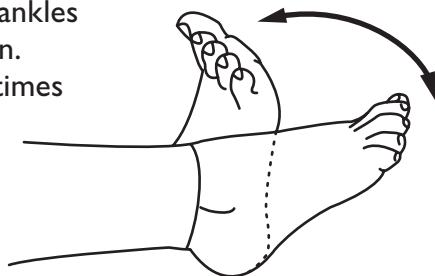
Exercises

- After surgery, it is important to do **deep breathing exercises**.
- Take 3-6 deep breaths in a row.
- Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- After the last breath, try to cough.

Doing your exercises and walking will aid in your recovery. The following exercises are to be done throughout the day.

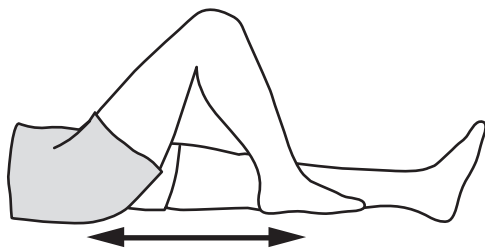
• Ankle

- » Lie on your back.
- » Pump both ankles up and down.
- » Do this 30 times per hour



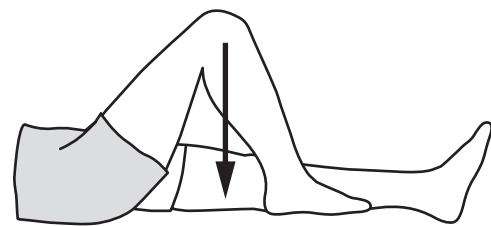
• Heel Slides

- » Lie on your back.
- » Bend one knee up and down.
- » Repeat with the other leg.
- » Do these 10 times each leg every hour.



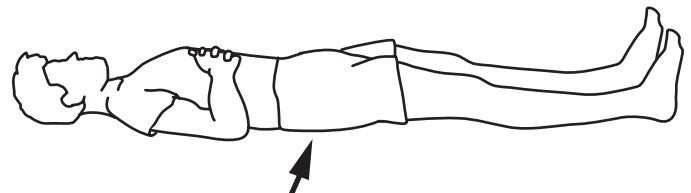
• Thigh muscle tightening

- » Lie on your back with your leg straight.
- » Gently tighten the front of your thigh.
- » Hold 5 seconds and then relax.
- » Repeat 10 times with each leg every hour.



• Buttock muscle squeeze

- » Lie on your back and gently squeeze your buttocks together.
- » Hold 5 seconds and then relax.
- » Do the exercise _____ times each session
- » Do the exercises _____ sessions per day



Healthlink BC Call 8-1-1 www.healthlinkbc.ca	Nurse	24 hours a day	Daily	Call 8-1-1 to speak with a nurse, ask a dietitian about nutrition, or a pharmacist about your medication.
	Dietitian	9 am–5 pm	Mon–Fri	
	Pharmacist	5 pm–9 am	Daily	
	Hearing Impaired	Call 7-1-1		

Movement And Exercises After Lumbar Surgery (continued)

How To Move

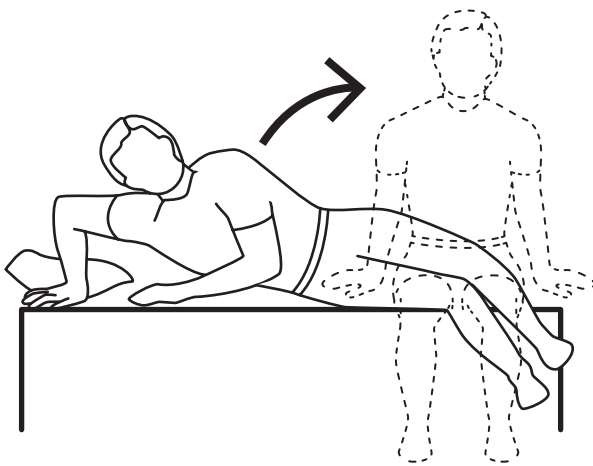
To get the best possible result, it is important that you keep moving. When you get up for the first time, the physiotherapist or nurse will be with you. You will need to use the log rolling method (see below) to sit at the edge of the bed. You may also use a walker to help steady yourself. Once you are out of bed, you may use the toilet or commode. You will be allowed to sit for short periods only (20 to 30 minutes).

- **Log Rolling Method**

- » The log rolling method should be used when turning your body from side to side. It keeps your head and shoulders in line with your body.
- » Lying on your back, bend your knees up so that your feet are flat on the bed.
- » Roll onto your side, moving your shoulders and hips together as you roll. Do not twist.

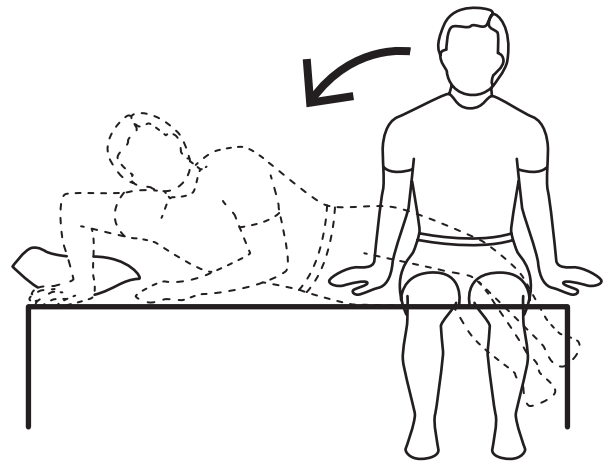
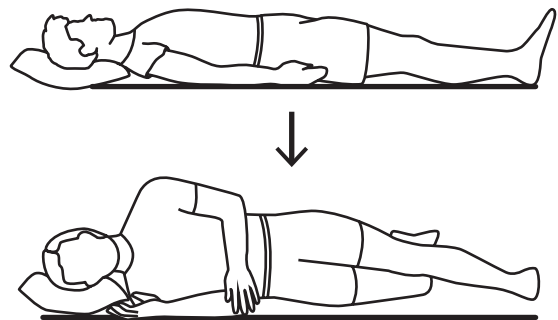
- **Getting out of bed**

- » Log roll onto your side. Drop your legs over the side of the bed and push yourself up to a sitting position using your bottom elbow and top arm.



- **Getting into bed:**

- » Sit on the edge of the bed, as far back as possible.
- » Lean down onto your elbow and forearm while lifting your legs at the same time, stay in the side lying position.
- » Log roll from your side onto your back. Do not twist.



Your Recovery

You may still get twinges of pain in your legs and possibly muscle cramps. These should go away with time. They occur because:

- There is swelling.
- Nerves may have been irritated during your surgery.
- It may take time for pre-surgery issues to improve.

Movement And Exercises After Lumbar Surgery (*continued*)

Return To Work

Please talk to your surgeon.

Normal Daily Activities

- **Feeling Tired?**

- » Slowly increase what you do every day. Take lots of rest breaks and stop the activity before your back gets sore.
- » Change positions often.
- » Do not do anything that causes you to strain.
- » Plan activities that can be stopped if you need to rest.
- » Pace yourself.
- » Start with short walks and gradually increase the time and distance.
- » Do not do everything at once.
- » Spread the work out over the day or week.

- **Resting and Sleeping Positions**

- » Sleep or rest on a firm bed or couch. Do not use the couch arm rest for your head.
- » Use a pillow between your knees when you are on your side.
- » Lie on your back with a pillow under your knees for comfort.
- » Take a rest. Consider a midday rest and get at least 8 hours of sleep, especially for the first week or two after surgery.

- **Grooming and Hygiene**

- » Ask your nurse or surgeon about when you can start bathing.
- » Avoid taking a tub bath.
- » A shower chair or bath bench may be helpful.
- » A long-handled sponge or brush should be used for reaching your feet and your back to prevent bending.
- » Wash your hair in the shower, rather than bending over a sink.
- » Any bending over sinks should be done with a straight back, bending at hips and knees.
- » Avoid holding your arms over your head (like using a hair dryer or curling iron).

- **Dressing**

- » Put shirts on over the head to avoid twisting your back.
- » Put lower clothing on while sitting on the edge of the bed or in a chair, not standing.
- » Shoes should have shock absorbing soles. Avoid heels higher than 2 inches (5cm).

- **Sitting**

- » Only sit for 20 to 30 minutes at a time.
- » Get up often and move around.
- » Sit in a firm armchair with good back and leg support. Put a small pillow in the low back region to keep your back in a neutral position.
- » Feet should be on the floor to reduce the pull on the lower back.
- » Avoid straight leg sitting.
- » When sitting, keep work close to the body and avoid bending forward.

- **Driving**

- » Speak to your Doctor about returning to driving.
- » Avoid driving when your back is sore.
- » Drive with the seat forward so that your legs are slightly bent. Don't strain to reach the pedals.
- » Take breaks – at least once an hour.
- » When getting into a car, back onto the seat and then bring your legs in instead of stepping in sideways.
- » Use a small, soft pillow in the small of the back if the seat is not comfortable.

Movement And Exercises After Lumbar Surgery (*continued*)

Normal Daily Activities (*continued*)

• Standing Activities

- » Maintain a neutral spine.
- » The height of the work station should be at least at waist level.
- » Put one foot up onto a stool or a cupboard when standing in one place for a period of time (change the up foot frequently).
- » Change positions every 20 to 30 minutes

• Lifting

- » Limit lifting to no greater than 10 pounds (4.5 kg) for 6 weeks after your surgery.
- » Plan the lift. Assess the load and get help if needed. Clear the path of obstacles.
- » Feet should be shoulder width apart.
- » Bend the knees and hips, not the back when lifting or lowering the load. Put one knee on the ground if squatting is uncomfortable. Maintain a neutral spine.
- » Keep the object close to your body.
- » Avoid twisting – turn your feet, not your waist, at least for the first 6 weeks
- » Lifting and activity limits will be removed gradually... speak to your Surgeon or Physiotherapist

• Housework

- » By the 2nd to 4th week, suitable activities include light housekeeping duties such as dishes, dusting, ironing, tidying, cooking or light sweeping, and house or yard projects that do not involve heavy lifting, bending, periods in one position, or twisting of the back.
- » Push rather than pull.
- » Bend from the hips and knees to reach low cupboards, oven or dishwasher. Pull racks out to improve accessibility.
- » Alternate light and heavier work. Get help for heavier tasks.
- » There should be no vacuuming or mopping in the first 6 weeks. After 6 weeks, use small strokes with the vacuum or mop, always facing the work area. Turn feet to avoid twisting. Keep feet shoulder width apart for a wide base of support.

• Sports and Leisure Activities

- » Gradually increase your walking distance on flat ground.
- » Avoid hill hiking for at least 2 months.
- » When fishing, do not lift your boat or motor and avoid sitting with your back twisted.
- » Swimming on your back can be started as soon as the incision is healed.
- » Wait at least one month before trying front swimming strokes.
- » Water walking is great exercise.
- » Light pruning or deadheading can be done from 2 weeks onwards.
- » Weeding, sowing and digging should be avoided for 6 weeks or more.
- » Gentle cross country skiing can be done two months after your surgery but avoid icy and deep snow conditions for a while.
- » Don't try golf, tennis, curling, skiing or horseback riding for at least six months after your surgery.

• Sex

- » Now is the time to communicate! Discuss positions to try beforehand. Allow your partner to be the more active participant until you are feeling better. Avoid positions which cause you to arch or bend your back excessively. Agree not to continue with anything that is painful.
- » Consider alternatives to sexual intercourse.
- » For the partner – be patient, and realize that discomfort and stress can put a damper on sex drive.
- » Touch and gentle massage can be relaxing and intimate.