



Pre-surgery and Recovery Checklist for Back Surgery Patients

Get ready during the weeks before your procedure with OrthoIndy's comprehensive, back surgery preparation checklist.

Once you've decided back surgery is right for you, there are a lot of things to remember, and timing is important. To help, OrthoIndy has developed this comprehensive checklist to help you prepare and know what to expect at each stage of your surgery, from planning to recovery.

Medications to Stop

Two Weeks Before Surgery:

- ❑ **Aspirin and blood thinners**
- ❑ **NSAIDs:** Advil, Aleve, ibuprofen, Motrin, Clinoril, Indocin, Celebrex, Vioxx, etc.
- ❑ **Herbs:** Chondroitin, danshen, feverfew, fish oil, garlic tablets, ginger tablets, ginko, ginseng, quilinggao, vitamin E, CoQ10

Tip: After you get home from your surgery, start walking as soon as possible. Create an indoor track in your home that's free of tripping obstacles. Make it a goal to walk your "track" six times a day for at least five minutes per walk.



Before Surgery

- ❑ Work to improve your fitness. Focus on strengthening your core muscles. Some suggested low-impact aerobic activities include walking and swimming.
- ❑ Eat well and work to improve your diet.
- ❑ Stop smoking.
- ❑ Schedule a dental check-up because you will have to wait until six months after surgery to get dental work or a cleaning.
- ❑ Get your home ready.
 - Clear the clutter and throw rugs from pathways where you'll be walking.
 - Arrange your kitchen for convenience, making sure all frequently used items are within reach. Post-surgery, you won't be able to bend to get into low cabinets or climb to reach items in high cabinets.
 - If you don't have one already, get a chair with firm seat and armrests that doesn't sit too low.
 - Assess your sleeping situation. You cannot sleep on a mattress on the floor or on a free float waterbed.
 - If you have a low toilet, get a raised seat to make using the bathroom safer and less difficult.
 - Add a non-slip mat to your shower/tub.
 - Make arrangements to have your laundry done and home cleaned.
 - Get help shopping for groceries and preparing food.



Tip: Arrange for a caregiver to stay with you for two to six weeks after you go home from the hospital. The length of time you'll need a caregiver will depend on the magnitude of surgery and your recovery. It's better to have too much help than not enough. It's easier to cancel planned help than to scramble at that point to find someone to stay with you.

- ☐ Arrange for someone to stay with you for two to six weeks.
- ☐ Consider getting pet care. Though pets provide comfort and companionship, they can also create tripping hazards. Plan accordingly.
- ☐ Pack your bag for the hospital with essentials, but leave valuables at home. You'll need:
 - Personal toiletries
 - Rubber-sole slippers
 - Comfy robe
 - Loose-fitting tops and pants with elastic waistbands

One day before your surgery

- ☐ Eat only light meals.
- ☐ You must refrain from eating or drinking after midnight.
- ☐ You can brush your teeth, just do not swallow any water.

Day of surgery

- ☐ Arrive two hours early for check-in.
- ☐ Meet with your anesthesiologist one-hour prior to surgery to discuss medications and get your catheter.

Tip: Remember, your surgery time is an approximation. If it is delayed, it is usually due to the surgery that happened earlier in the day.

Remember

Bring your medications in their original containers. These are provided by the hospital, but we may need to confirm the doses as they are written on the bottle

In the Operating Room

An anesthesiologist will put you under general anesthesia. It is typically 60 minutes from the time you enter the operating room before your spine surgeon makes the first incision.

After the procedure is finished, it takes 60 minutes to wake you up and bring you to the recovery room.

Your loved ones will be notified when your surgery is over.

Recovery

- ✓ You may have body swelling, but it should subside in one to two days.
- ✓ Your back doctor will have you use an intermittent pneumatic compression device or have you wear compression leggings, called TED hose. Both of help prevent blood clots while you are immobile.
- ✓ You will have a catheter inserted to drain urine. Your nurses will remove it when you are able to get out of bed and use the restroom.
- ✓ You'll have one or more drains near your incision to control fluid build-up.
- ✓ You will have access to medications, as needed, for symptoms such as:
 - Muscle spasms
 - Nausea
 - Indigestion
 - Itching
 - Pain
- ✓ Use an incentive spirometer to measure how deeply you are breathing. Make it a personal contest to use it frequently monitor lung function improvements.



Tip: These drains collect excess bleeding and drainage from under the skin to keep your wound from swelling.



Physical Therapy

- ❑ Your physical therapist will teach you how to sit up and get out of bed on the first day after your surgery.
- ❑ You'll be seen by a physical therapist daily while in the hospital in order to help your back doctor determine when you are doing well enough to go home.
- ❑ Your physical therapist will also instruct you on sitting, standing, rolling over in bed and using a walker.

Wound Care

- ❑ Make sure to change your bandages at least once per day. It doesn't hurt to change them more.
- ❑ The Steri-strips (tape strips) will fall off by themselves. If they don't come off on their own after two weeks, you may remove them.
- ❑ Do not put any antibacterial ointments on any incisions or wounds.
- ❑ You may wash area around the incision and pat it dry. Do not wash your wound.
- ❑ If your incision is no longer draining fluid, you may take a shower two weeks after your surgery. There is no need to cover the incision, but please it is completely dry after showering.
- ❑ Do not submerge your wound in a bath or pool for eight weeks.

Medications After Surgery

- ❑ Your back doctor will prescribe pain medication for you. If you need refill on these medicines, please call five business days in advance.
- ❑ Do not use anti-inflammatory medications. This includes aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), and naproxen (Aleve). You may use Tylenol.



The first few weeks after surgery

During your first days back home, you will feel weak and tired. Your strength will return a little bit with each passing day. Follow these tips to aid the recovery process. You might find yourself wanting to move your body like you did before your surgery, but concentrate on moving, rolling, sitting and standing correctly to avoid re-injury.

Be patient with your caregivers. In the early days of recovery, they are learning how to help you.

Remember

- ✓ Walk often. Walking helps the recovery process and prevents blood clots.
- ✓ During the first six weeks, avoid bending or lifting anything.
- ✓ Accept help from others.



Please Note: This is a general schedule of when the patient can return to normal activities. Each patient is different so there may be some exceptions. The type of surgery you have will influence your return to activities. Check with your back doctor when you come for your post-op visits to see what you can do.

Make an Appointment

With years of experience and the most cutting-edge tools available, OrthoIndy spine surgeons will give you the best chance possible to achieve your recovery goals.

Make an appointment and let OrthoIndy's team of experts help you find a solution that will work best for you.

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Activity Restrictions

- ✓ To turn in bed, tighten your stomach muscles and bend your knees slightly. Keep your ears, shoulders and hips in line when rolling over. Do not twist or bend.
- ✓ To get out of bed, tighten your stomach muscles, roll to your side, and push your body up with one elbow. Gently lower legs to the floor, keeping your stomach muscles tight.
- ✓ Use your arms to lift yourself up and guide yourself down. Keep your ears, shoulders and hips in line. Do not twist or bend.
- ✓ Driving
 - You may ride as a passenger when you feel able. Sit in the front passenger seat, slightly reclined if possible.
 - Try not to take long trips. If unavoidable, stop every hour and a half to walk.
 - Do not resume driving until approximately six weeks after surgery and do not drive while taking strong pain medications.

Six Weeks After Surgery

Increased pain for more than two hours after activity usually indicates that you've overdone it. If you can tolerate the pain, resist the urge to take pain medication because pills can mask pain and allow you to push yourself further than you should. Take pain as a warning sign to slow down and continue to take small steps back into normal activity.