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Discharge Instructions Lumbar Fusion

Name: _____

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Medications:

- Taking acetaminophen (Tylenol) is acceptable, but avoid ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil), Naproxen (Naprosyn), Indomethacin (Indocin), and Aleve for three months.
- If you experience constipation while taking a narcotic pain reliever, begin using an over-the-counter laxative.
- Use a muscle relaxant to prevent muscle spasms or severe muscle tightness.
- If you were taking Aspirin or Plavix prior to surgery, you may resume these medications on the third day after the procedure, unless directed otherwise by your physician.

Diet:

- Resume whatever diet you were on before surgery (e.g., unrestricted, diabetic, low sodium, etc.)
- For optimal bone healing after a spinal fusion procedure, both Calcium and Vitamin D are necessary. Most people require in a day 1,200 mg of Calcium and 800 International Units (IU) of Vitamin D. While getting enough of both is important, taking too much can be harmful and contribute to other medical problems such as kidney stones or hardening of the arteries, which can lead to heart attack or stroke. In general, four daily servings of dairy products (milk, yogurt, cheese, etc.) should be adequate for you to meet this requirement **without** the need for dietary supplements.

Activity:

- Avoid pushing/pulling and lifting over 15 lbs. for six weeks.
- From now on, even when lifting light weight, bend with your knees and not your back.
- Walking is a good exercise. Go for at least four short walks a day, even if inside your home.
- You may remove your Ted Hose stockings once you are consistently walking four times a day.
- Sitting will not harm your back but will likely be uncomfortable for several weeks following surgery. Standing or lying down are generally better tolerated.
- Provided that the above restrictions are observed, you may engage in other activities, including sexual intercourse, that do not result in worsened pain either at the time of the activity or the following morning.
- Do not drive for the first two weeks after surgery or if you have had any pain medication within four hours. You may ride in a car as a passenger as much as tolerated.
- If a brace has been ordered for you after surgery, it must be worn whenever you are sitting up, standing, or walking. You may apply it sitting at the edge of your bed. It does not need to be worn while lying flat in bed or when showering.

Wound Care:

- Call the office if you have drainage from your wound, separation of wound edges, or increased pain, redness or swelling.
- Call the office if you have an elevated temperature (101 F or greater).
- You may shower at any time, but do not soak the incision in a tub or pool for 10 days after surgery. Dry the incision by blotting, not rubbing.
- You do not need to keep a dressing on the wound.
- If you have steri-strips on, leave the steri-strips in place for 10 days after surgery. If their edges curl up, you may trim carefully with scissors. If they fall off early, don't worry. Re-absorbable sutures are beneath the skin edges and will continue to support the incision while it heals.
- If you have staples or sutures visible over the skin, please call to arrange for their removal approximately 10 days after surgery at a time convenient to you.

X-rays:

- You will need to have X-rays done within a few days before your four-week follow-up appointment.
- These can be done at the hospital or the imaging center in our building. If you choose to have them done at the Holland Hospital Imaging Center on the day of your appointment, please plan to arrive 45 minutes prior to your appointment.
- Please bring the X-rays with you to your follow-up appointment UNLESS they were done at Holland Hospital. (We can access their x-rays via a secure Internet link.)

Follow-up: Date: _____ Time: _____

With: David W. Lowry, MD
Scott Tuinstra, PA-C