

Posterior Cervical Laminoplasty

Below are some of the most common questions we receive from patients who are considering proceeding with a Posterior Cervical Laminoplasty surgery. Please keep in mind that the recovery from surgery is quite subjective and is affected by various factors such as patient age, comorbid illness, degrees of spinal cord or nerve impingement, the length of illness prior to surgery as well as the degree of disability prior to surgery to name a few. The answers below are based on the average patient that we see.

1. How long will I be out of work?

The average length of time out of work after a laminoplasty surgery is between 2-4 weeks. Patients who perform labor intensive jobs are most likely to be out of work closer to 4 week.

2. When will I be able to drive?

Most patients are able to begin driving, short distances, between 2-3 weeks after surgery. You may be a passenger in a car as soon as you feel up to it. We do advise that you are prohibited from driving while taking narcotic pain medication.

3. When will I see you back in the office?

The first post op visit is approximately 2-3 weeks after surgery, however if you have any questions or concerns please call the office at 303-697-7463. If we think we should see you in the office sooner we will then schedule an earlier appointment.

4. How long will I be wearing the cervical collar?

The average amount of time patients wear the cervical collar after a laminoplasty is 2-3 weeks.

5. Will I need Physical therapy?

We will provide you with isometric neck strengthening exercises that can be performed independently. If you are experiencing any motor weakness or balance changes before surgery we will likely recommend outpatient physical therapy after surgery.

6. Will I need to have sutures removed?

Most patients do not have sutures that need to be removed. There are internal sutures that will dissolve with time. There may also be steri-strips (white pieces of tape) over the incision that will either fall off or we will remove them in the office at your first post op appointment.

7. Will I set off metal detectors?

No, the titanium instrumentation does not currently set off metal detectors.

8. Will I be able to have a MRI after surgery?

Yes, the titanium instrumentation does not react to the magnet in the MRI machine however you should still notify the MRI facility of the presence of the instrumentation.

9. What restrictions will I have after surgery?

For the first 2-3 weeks your activity will be limited to walking. We encourage you to walk as much as you are comfortable. During this time you may go up and down stairs, with the use of a railing and you may also sleep in a normal bed. You will be limited to lifting 5 lbs for the first 2 weeks. After 2 weeks you will be able to resume low impact cardiovascular activities and increase the amount of weight you are lifting. Within a reasonable amount of time after surgery you will have very few restrictions in your activities. Please be sure to discuss any specific questions you have with us in the office.

10. *Is the surgery very painful?*

Please keep in mind that pain is a very subjective experience and one's reaction to surgery is affected by a variety of factors as mentioned above. The most common concerns we hear from patients after a laminoplasty surgery are incisional discomfort and discomfort around their scapula (or shoulder blade). Both of these tend to resolve prior to the first post-operative appointment, 2-3 weeks after surgery. It is not uncommon for a patient to experience "reminder" symptoms after surgery. These symptoms are often described as feeling similar to the patient's preoperative symptoms. While this is common in recovery from spine surgery we understand that this can be very concerning to our patients. We encourage you to call the office to discuss any concerns you may have after surgery 303-697-7463.

11. *Do I need to avoid any medications or foods before or after surgery?*

We ask that you refrain from taking any nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications such as aspirin, Ibuprofen (Advil) or Aleve for 10 days prior to your surgery and for 10 weeks after your surgery. If you have a physician who recommends that you do not stop Aspirin prior to surgery please be sure to discuss this with our office. We also ask that you avoid any herbal supplements, as well as vitamin K, vitamin E and fish oil for 10 days before your surgery and for 10 weeks after your surgery.

12. *Should I stop smoking prior to surgery?*

You should discontinue all exposure to nicotine, as well as nicotine containing products, two weeks before and at least 6 weeks after your surgery. Many insurance companies require documentation that you have stopped smoking at least 6 weeks prior to your scheduled fusion surgery before they will authorize your surgery.