
Patient Guide to Spine Surgery



Baylor Scott & White
SURGICAL HOSPITAL
LAS COLINAS

Welcome

Thank you for choosing Baylor Scott & White Surgical Hospital Las Colinas and allowing us to assist you in returning to your everyday activities as quickly as possible. We have developed a comprehensive guide to help outline what to expect from your surgery, what you can do before surgery and after surgery to be better prepared and additional pertinent information.

You play a key role in ensuring a successful recovery. Our goal is to involve you in your treatment throughout each step of the program. Having a family member or friend with you is highly recommended. He or she can help build confidence, offer support, help with your care while in the hospital and once discharged, help meet your goals, improve your results and ultimately get you home earlier.

This booklet is intended to give you all the necessary information for a comfortable, informed and successful surgical outcome.

We appreciate the opportunity to assist you on your road to recovery.

Sincerely,

The Team at Baylor Scott & White Surgical Hospital
Las Colinas

We offer a Spine Pre-Op Class every Tuesday from 10 am - 12 pm and every 3rd Thursday from 6-8 pm.

Spine Classes will educate patients and family/friends (Spine “Coach”) about what to expect after spine surgery. The class also includes information about how to prepare for surgery, your hospital stay, and the transition home.

GO HERE to sign up for a Spine Class:
[Baylorlascolinas.com/spine-surgery-class/](https://www.baylorlascolinas.com/spine-surgery-class/)



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Important Appointments

To Schedule your Spine Education Class please call (972) 868-4035.

Your Spine Surgery Education Class is scheduled at

Date: _____ Time: _____

To Schedule your Pre-Operative Testing please call (972) 868-4000.

Your Pre-Operative Testing is scheduled at

Date: _____ Time: _____

PLEASE BRING:

- ☐ Physicians orders if they have not already sent them over
- ☐ Bring any copay required by your insurance company
- ☐ Insurance/Medicare cards and photo ID
- ☐ List of previous surgeries
- ☐ All current medication in their original bottles or a list with names and doses
- ☐ Emergency contact information and names with phone numbers
- ☐ Copy of advance directives if you have them

Your spine surgery is scheduled at

Baylor Scott & White Surgical Hospital Las Colinas
400 W LBJ, Irving, TX 75063:

Date: _____ Time: _____

Your Surgeon: _____

PLEASE BRING:

- ☐ Insurance/Medicare cards and photo ID
- ☐ All current medication in their original bottles



Frequently Asked Questions

Will I need to donate blood before surgery?

Blood donation before surgery is not essential, but if you wish you may do so as long as you meet certain criteria. A friend or relative with the same blood type may donate blood ahead of time on your behalf, and it will be checked for compatibility. You can also receive blood from the community blood bank if necessary.

Should I start or stop any medications?

- Do not take Plavix®, anti-inflammatory medications containing aspirin or ibuprofen, or blood thinners within two weeks of surgery unless permitted by your physician.
- Ask your surgeon which prescription medications, over the counter drugs, and vitamin/ herbal supplements you should/should not take before surgery.
- Generally, you may take most medications until the day of surgery. Ask if you should take your heart and blood pressure medication with a sip of water on the day of surgery.

How long will my surgery take?

Depending upon the difficulty of your case, surgery can take anywhere from one to four hours, with an additional one to three hours in the recovery room.

Will I be in much pain after surgery?

Most patients experience mild to moderate discomfort in the days and weeks following spinal surgery. As with any surgery, individual patient results and experiences vary. You may have pain medication and muscle relaxers available to take as needed. Make sure to talk with your doctor before surgery about your pain management options.



How long will I be in the hospital?

Some patients are hospitalized for about two days, including the day of surgery. Nearly all are able to return home immediately following their hospital stay. You should contact your health insurance provider to find out what is covered and obtain these provisions in writing.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are my financial responsibilities?

Talk with your health insurance provider to determine your coverage. You may be asked to provide a co-payment prior to surgery. In addition to your portion of the hospital bill, you may receive separate bills from multiple physicians including surgeon, anesthesiologists, pathologists, radiologists, and primary care and specialty care physicians.

Will I need someone to stay full time with me when I go home?

It is best for someone to be with you the first 24 to 72 hours after discharge. If you cannot arrange a full-time helper, perhaps a friend or neighbor can call daily to check on your progress.

When can I go up and down stairs?

Most patients can climb stairs before leaving the hospital.

When can I go outside?

You may go outside at any time. Start with short trips at first, such as to physical therapy or doctor's appointments, and increase the number, type, and duration of outside activities as you feel more comfortable.

When can I drive?

Most patients must wait two weeks before driving, but your surgeon may allow you to drive sooner if you can do so safely and you are no longer taking narcotics. The type of surgery and your overall general conditions will play a part in the decision. Do not drive until your surgeon approves it at your two-week follow-up visit.

When can I return to work?

The majority of patients wait at least two to six weeks before returning to work. Discuss your situation with your surgeon during your follow-up visit.

When will I be able to engage in sexual activities after surgery?

In general, most patients resume normal sexual activities within two to four weeks after surgery.

Pre-Op Checklist

Preparing for spinal surgery begins weeks before the actual surgery. To ensure your surgery can be performed as scheduled, you should complete the following arrangements before being admitted to the hospital:

- ☐ **Donate blood (optional)**
- ☐ **Get a physical exam**
A physical examination is required within 30 days of your surgical date to assess your overall health and identify any medical conditions that could interfere with your surgery or recovery.
- ☐ **See the dentist**
An infection can occur if bacteria enters the bloodstream. Inform your surgeon if you have had dental work within one month of your surgery date.
- ☐ **Review current medications with your surgeon**
- ☐ **Discuss your pain management plan with doctors**
If possible, fill any prescriptions you need before you are discharged from the hospital.
- ☐ **Arrange transportation to and from the hospital**
Make arrangements for someone to bring you to the hospital and pick you up when you are discharged. You may also need assistance getting to and from follow-up appointments if you are not yet able to drive yourself.

The Night Before Surgery

You will be able to eat up to 6 hours and drink clear liquids up to 3 hours prior to your surgery time. You may need to take some medication, such as blood pressure medicines or pain medicine, before your surgery. Take the medications you have with a sip of water. At your pre-admission testing appointment you will be instructed by the nurse on what medications to take the morning of surgery.



Diet and Exercise

Do your best to be in good physical shape before your surgery. Eat a well-balanced diet. The best exercise for you is daily walking. Always check with your family doctor before starting any workout routine.

Fall Prevention

Prepare your home ahead of time. Remove all items on the floor that could cause you to trip including cords, rugs, or unnecessary items. Place items you will use often in places that you can reach without bending, lifting, or twisting. If you have pets in your home, you should consider making arrangements for them to be away for the first 2-3 days you are home after surgery.

While you are with us we ask that you call for help when getting out of bed and getting to and from the rest room. Please **DO NOT** get up without assistance.

Stop Smoking

Studies show non-smokers heal easier than do smokers. If you smoke, we strongly encourage you to stop smoking before having surgery. Many products are available to help you quit smoking. Please do not use the nicotine patch or gum. Nicotine slows bone healing. Please contact your primary care provider to talk about your best option.

Day of Surgery

Please arrive two hours before your scheduled surgery time to go through the admission process:

- Enter through the south entrance and the admission clerk will have you sign any necessary paperwork before walking you down to the Pre-Op area
- The Pre-Op nurse will take vital signs and complete a general health screen
- There will be several checks to make sure the correct surgery is being done. A “time out” will be performed with the doctor, anesthesiologist, nurse, and patient to review medical history and mark the area to be operated on. The nurse will check the consent form you signed to make sure it agrees with the procedure on the operating room list
- Once you are transported to the operating room, loved ones will be directed to the waiting area. The medical staff will speak with them when you are out of surgery and in recovery room.

WHAT TO BRING WITH YOU:

- ☐ Medication in original bottle
- ☐ Personal toiletries i.e toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, brush
- ☐ Loose fitting clothing
- ☐ Shoes that are easy to put on (no slippers or house shoes)
- ☐ Your brace (if you have one)
- ☐ A walker (if you have one)
- ☐ Any paperwork you may need including durable power of attorney or insurance cards
- ☐ Electronic devices and power chargers

In Surgery

Depending on the procedure, your surgery could take approximately one to four hours (may be longer if more extensive). The people who will be with you in the operating room include:

- **Surgeon(s)**- your doctor(s) who perform surgery
- **Physician assistant/nurse practitioner**- may assist your doctor(s) who will perform surgery
- **Anesthesiologist**- the doctor who gives your anesthesia
- **Surgical technologist**- the person who hands the doctors the tools they need during surgery
- **Circulating nurse**- a registered nurse who oversees the care given in the operating room and brings things to the surgical room
- **Radiologic technologist**- a registered technologist that takes x-rays during your surgery

You may have any of the following during surgery and recovery:

- **Intravenous tube (IV)**- Used to replace fluids lost during surgery, administer pain medicine, or deliver antibiotics and other medications
- **Bladder catheter**- This tube may be placed in your bladder to keep up with your fluid intake and output.
- **Wound drain tube**- This tube may be inserted during surgery to help reduce blood and fluid buildup at the incision
- **Compression stockings and sequential compression wraps**- Compression stocking will be put on your legs to help blood flow. You may also have sequential compression foot or leg wraps that are connected to a machine that inflates them with air to promote blood flow and decrease possibility of blood clots.

After Surgery

Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU)

After surgery you will spend at least an hour in the recovery room (PACU). Your blood pressure and heart rate will be monitored closely as the effects of the anesthesia wear off. If you are leaving the same day as surgery, this is where you will discharge from once pain is controlled and you are medically stable.

Transfer to Post Surgical Unit

Once your surgeon and medical team determine it is safe for you to be transferred from the recovery room, you will be transported to your hospital room.

- You will be able to have liquids and soft foods as tolerated. Keeping your sugar intake low will decrease your risk of postoperative infection.
- The nursing staff will closely monitor your vital signs, urinary output, surgical dressing, and drainage.
- You may be able to have pain medication and muscle relaxers. All medication will be administered and closely monitored by the nursing staff.
- A physical therapist will assist getting you out of bed within 1-4 hours to promote mobility and independence.

Hospital Routine

Pain Management

You may have an intravenous “pain pump” that allows you to control your own pain medication up to a predetermined dosage. Pain medication may also be administered through IV or pills.

Moving and Positioning

Until you have been cleared to move independently, a staff member must help you safely get in and out of bed and change positions in bed to help avoid injury to the surgical area.

Your restrictions will depend on the type of spinal surgery you have had. Your nurses and physical therapists will educate you on appropriate positioning.

Your nurses and physical therapists will help you practice the safest methods for:

- Getting in and out of bed
- Sitting and rising from a chair or toilet
- Walking with a walker, crutches, or cane
- Putting on and taking off clothing, underwear, socks, and shoes
- Climbing stairs



Back Surgery: How to Care for Yourself

Spinal precautions: No BLTs

- **Bending**- Avoid forward bending. If you need to pick something up from the floor, squat down bending your hips and knees, keeping your back straight to limit stress on the spine
- **Lifting**- Do not lift or carry anything heavier than 5-10 pounds during the first two weeks following surgery.
- **Twisting**- Do not twist or turn your back. Keep your shoulders, hips, and feet in line to minimize twisting.

After Your Surgery

- Walk and exercise daily. Listen to your body and allow for frequent rest periods.
- Lie on your back or side for six weeks after surgery. You may find it more comfortable when sleeping on your side to have a pillow between your knees or under your knees when on your back.
- Remember to log roll when getting in and out of bed:

1. From your back, determine which direction would be most comfortable for you to roll to



3. As you lower both legs off the bed, use your arms to push yourself up into a sitting position



2. Without lifting your head or shoulder, proceed to roll completely on to your side



4. Take a couple of deep breaths before proceeding



Diet

Immediately after surgery your diet will consist of clear liquids or soft foods as tolerated, then quickly progress to solid foods. To avoid constipation, try to:

- Request a meal high in fiber with more fresh fruit, vegetables, whole grain cereals, and breads
- Drink at least six to eight eight-ounce glasses
- Increase physical activity as much as you can tolerate

Physical Therapy

The quicker you start moving again, the sooner you will be able to regain your independence. After your initial physical therapy evaluation, you can walk with your nurse or patient care tech.

You will be expected to walk at least 3–4 times per day.

Upon discharge you will be given written discharge instructions from the therapy department. This will have your precautions and exercises on it for after discharge. At your two-week follow up visit with your doctor, you will find out how long you will need to abide by the precautions.

Your doctor may or may not have you use a brace after your surgery. If your doctor fitted you for a brace prior to surgery **bring it to the hospital**. The length of time that you will be wearing your brace is up to the doctor.

Wear the brace **over your clothing**. This will protect your skin from breakdown.

Visitors

Family and friends will be allowed to visit you in the hospital provided they let you get your rest and not interfere with your care.

Discharge

You will be ready to discharge from the hospital when you, independently or with minimal assistance, are able to safely:

- Get in and out of bed
- Walk with or without an assisted device
- Put on and take off your brace, if you are prescribed one
- Transfer on/off toilet
- Ascend/descend stairs

Home Care

The First Two Weeks

- Check with your doctor about special precautions you must take while you are on blood thinning medications.
- Gradually wean yourself from prescription medicine to over-the-counter pain relievers as advised by your doctor.
- Keep yourself hydrated to prevent dehydration and constipation, eat fresh fruits and vegetables, and use stool softeners or laxatives if necessary.
- Use ice to reduce pain before or after exercise. **No heat** over surgical site – can cause increased bleeding or infection.
- It is common to have trouble sleeping; however, try not to nap too much during the day.
- If recommended by your doctor, wear compression stockings given to you in the hospital to control swelling and reduce the risk of blood clots as instructed for as long as your doctor advises.

Incision Care

Be sure to wash your hands thoroughly before and after changing the dressing.

If instructed by doctor, you may shower but do not immerse your incision. After you shower, replace the dressing with new gauze and tape. You will have steri strips over the incision. You **MUST** leave these on for two weeks. The surgeon will remove them at your two-week appointment.

Complications/When to Call

Call your family doctor if you experience any of the following:

- Blood pressure issues
- Diabetic control problems
- General medical problems

My Family Doctor: _____

Phone Number: _____

Call your surgeon if you experience any of the following:

- Temperature greater than 101.4 degrees
- New back, neck, leg or arm pain
- New weakness
- Drainage, bleeding, redness or swelling around your wound
- Opening of the incision
- Difficulty with urination or bowel movements
- Difficulty swallowing, skin rash or excessive itching

My Surgeon: _____

Phone Number: _____

Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room if you experience any of the following:

- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Calf or leg pain
- Swelling of your leg and calf

Nationally Recognized for Excellence in Orthopedic and Spine Care

Baylor Scott & White Surgical Hospital Las Colinas

At BSW Surgical Hospital Las Colinas, we continually strive to provide the best care and experience for our orthopedic and spine patients and their families. This focus on excellence has allowed us to receive some recognition from leading government and industry groups:

- Center of Excellence for Spine Surgery
- Spinal Fusion Surgery 5-Star Recipient, HealthGrades 2018-2020
- Baylor Scott & White Low Back Pain Center of Excellence 2020 Designated Facility



BSW Las Colinas specializes in providing comprehensive outpatient and inpatient surgical treatment for a wide variety of medical conditions.

To find out more about these awards and what they mean to you, visit our website at baylorlascolinas.com or call 972.868.4000 for an appointment.



BaylorLasColinas.com
972.868.4000 Appointments

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