

# Back Surgery for Spinal Stenosis: Returning Home

After you've had back surgery for spinal stenosis, it may take time to heal and make your back strong again.

Your back will probably feel stiff and sore.

And you may find it uncomfortable to sit or stand in one position for very long.

But this usually gets better with time.

If you've also had spinal fusion, you may need to wear a back brace while you heal.

Your doctor will talk to you about when you can work and when you can get back to your daily routines.

It depends on the type of work you do, but many people are able to return to work about 2 to 4 weeks after surgery.

If your job requires physical labor, like lifting or twisting, it may take about 4 to 8 weeks.

If you also had spinal fusion, it will take longer.

And talk to your doctor about when you'll be able to do most of your favorite activities again.

Once you're home, here are some things you can do to help yourself get better.

Be sure to follow any instructions about diet or activity.

And follow any instructions for incision care.

If your doctor gave you a prescription for pain medicine, take the medicine as prescribed.

You can also ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.

If you have pain, use an ice pack on the area for about 10 to 20 minutes a few times each day.

Put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin.

Ask your doctor when you can take any bandages off and when it will be okay to shower.

You may need to take sponge baths until your stitches or staples have been removed.

Your doctor may recommend a rehab program that might include exercises or physical therapy, also called physiotherapy, to help you get stronger.

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You'll also be taught how to move your body so you can avoid problems.

Here are some things to watch for after your surgery.

Call your doctor if you have any bleeding or signs of infection, such as increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness; red streaks leading from the area; pus draining from the area; or a fever.

And call if you have new or worse symptoms in your arms, legs, chest, belly, or buttocks.

Symptoms to watch for may include numbness or tingling, weakness, or pain.

Call your doctor if you lose bladder or bowel control.

Also watch for signs of a blood clot.

These signs include leg pain, redness, swelling in the leg, shortness of breath, or chest pain.

These are serious symptoms, so if you have any of them, get emergency help right away.

Now, this may seem like a lot to do, but all these things are important.

They can help you heal and feel better.

And remember, if you have any questions, you can always call your doctor.