

SPINE SURGERY PATIENT NAVIGATORS

This program supports spine surgery patients by providing social support, guiding resource connection, and helping with movement after surgery.



Navigators Team 2023-2024

THE SUPPORT PROCESS



Who are the Navigators?

This program brings together a team of medical and undergraduate students who are excited about improving access to care and committed to supporting patients.

1

MEETING PATIENT NEEDS

Navigators improve access to care, acting as a point of contact to answer questions and connect to resources. This includes concerns with medications, pain, or sleep, or any new symptoms.

2

SOCIAL SUPPORT

Navigators provide constant social support. They spend time connecting with patients before and after surgery in the hospital and continue to check-in on patient wellbeing with phone calls.

3

FOLLOW UP

Navigators calls the patient ~two times a week until the six-week follow-up appointment. Navigators monitor for and support patients throughout their symptoms, focusing post-operative movement.

PATIENT REVIEWS

*“Would definitely recommend this program to others. Good to tell things about what seeing medicine and get feedback- navigator always there. **“A good thing to have someone always there”**. Excellent. Loved the program.”* *“It feels like you all really **care about me.**”*



Patient Support Resources

Duke Spine Center is here to support you.



Education and post-operative support are essential to a patient's recovery and well-being after surgery. From financial support to transportation assistance, medication resources, and emotional support, the following assistance networks aim to reduce the various challenges and barriers one may face after surgery. You can find more information on the Support and Resources site on the DukeHealth website.

Financial

- **The Duke Benefits Enrollment Center** supports Medicare beneficiaries by providing access to essential services like healthy food, medical care, prescriptions, Medicaid, heating assistance, and other supportive programs.
- **Explore HealthCare.gov** to discover affordable health insurance plans both government and private entities provide.

Housing

- **The Durham Housing Choice Voucher Program** aims to support low-income families by providing a rent subsidy to help them afford private housing.
- **Durham Rescue Mission** offers shelter, food, clothing, counseling, training, and job placement.

Food

- **Meals on Wheels** provides daily, nutritious meals to homebound seniors in need.
- **United Way NC 211** has links to a variety of resources on food pantries.
- **Urban Ministries Community Café** offers two meals daily and a bagged lunch after breakfast.

Transportation


- **Free parking passes** are available at Duke Health locations.
- **Project Access** provides community access to specialty care laboratories, clinics, pharmacies, and hospitals in Durham, Wake, and Johnston Counties.

Education

- **Free Virtual Spine Education** classes will help you learn what to expect from spine surgery, including pre-and post-hospital care and other valuable information. You can find a Class on Duke's Spine Center website.
- **DukeWELL** partners with you between office visits—on the phone or in person—providing support services that improve your chances of achieving your health goals.

Social Support

- **NCCARE360** is a comprehensive care network across the state that offers assistance with food, housing, transportation, and various non-medical social needs.
- **Spine Surgery Social Work Services** are available throughout Duke Hospital and outpatient clinics to assist patients in managing spine surgery-related stresses.
- **El Futuro** specializes in providing substance abuse and mental health services for the Latinx/Hispanic community.

 If you need help with these resources, please don't hesitate to contact your Case Manager, Social Worker, or Surgeon.



Scan for more details

COPING WITH POST-OPERATIVE PAIN

Pain can vary after surgery. It is good to set helpful, short-term goals to recognize your progress. In addition to our team assisting you, here are some practices that could help you manage your pain. There are many ways that can help, so you can find practices that work best for you!

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

1. As you breathe in, squeeze one muscle group and hold for 5 seconds
2. As you breathe out, fully relax the muscle
3. Repeat across your body, resting in-between each section

Breathing

1. Place one hand on your belly and the other on your chest. Notice the movement as you breathe.
2. Inhale through nose, fill lower then upper lungs. Exhale through mouth with a whooshing sound.
3. Repeat 8-10 times, focusing on relaxation as you exhale.

Guided Imagery

1. Find a quiet place and a comfortable position.
2. Imagine a peaceful or relaxing place as fully as you can. Use all of your senses, such as sight, sound, and smell, to help guide you.

Exercises

Follow your PT Instructions.

Remember **BLT**:

- **B**: No bending: Squat or bend from your knees, but not from your waist!
- **L**: No Lifting more than 5 pounds.
- **T**: No Twisting. Move your body as a single unit.
- Gentle movement.
- When walking, use mobility aids.

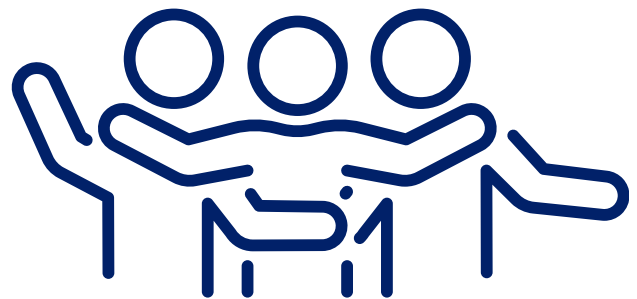


Use active pain coping strategies, such as positive self-talk and encouragement:
“I’ve had flare-ups in pain before, and it settles down again.”



Avoid passive pain coping strategies, such as negative thoughts and all-or-none thinking:
“If I can’t do this, I won’t get better.”

Inform your team of any worries about your post-operative recovery journey



Listen to your body

and know that mobility after surgery may be limited-and that’s okay!

Pace yourself,

recovery is not a race, but a journey to take step by step!

Use distractions from pain,

such as watching movies, talking with friends, or listening to music

Ask for help, you are not

alone and have support from your spine center team. We are here for you through this experience.

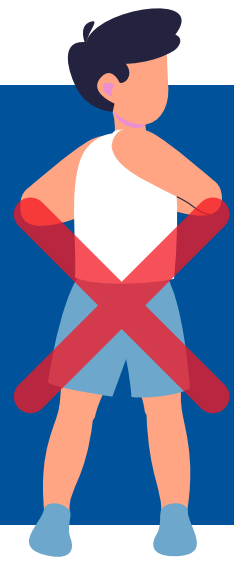
*Disclaimer: This guide is intended to operate as an additional, general resource to help in coping with postoperative pain. Your physician should be your primary resource. Upon experiencing any new and/or alarming symptoms, such as **trouble urinating, large increases in pain, and numbness**, please contact your physician.

EARLY POSTOPERATIVE MOBILITY

Early mobilization after surgery has been shown to significantly reduce the incidence of perioperative complications, shorten the length of hospital stay, and improve functional status. Listed below are exercises to try at different stages of recovery and general tips!

Avoid BLT!

Avoid bending over, lifting (5-8 lbs), and twisting at the spine. Be careful when getting in or out of bed, bathing, dressing, etc.



Supine/Lying

Ankle pumps, knee bends or heel slides, knee to chest, and glute squeezes are great exercises while lying down. To progress these stretches, try increasing the range, holding contraction to isolate muscles, or increase the number of reps/sets/frequency.



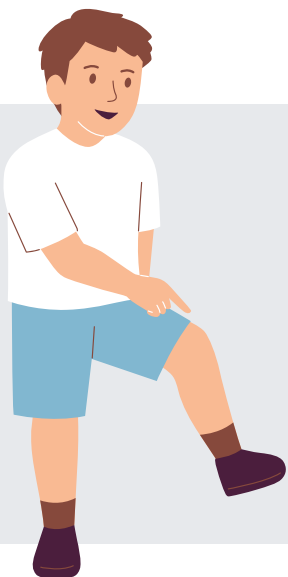
Sitting

Try knee extension or flexion, marches, arm rows, shoulder rolls, and scapular squeezes. If you're comfortable, progress by decreasing back/upper extremity support to engage core muscles and increase demand on the lower body.



Standing/dynamic

When you are ready, try sit-to-stands, progressive walking programs, standing marches, sidestepping, and mini-squats.



Be cautious!

Follow the advice of physical therapists and listen to your body. Maintaining your safety is essential! Below, find photos and more details on the various exercises listed above.



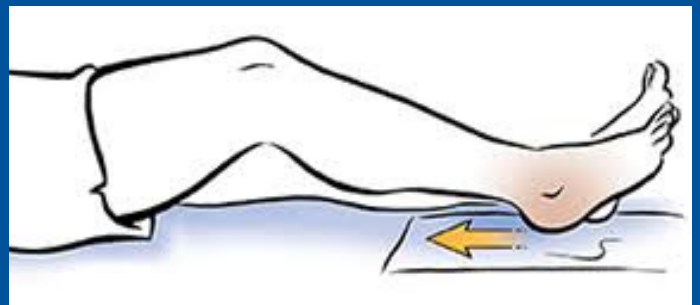
SUPINE



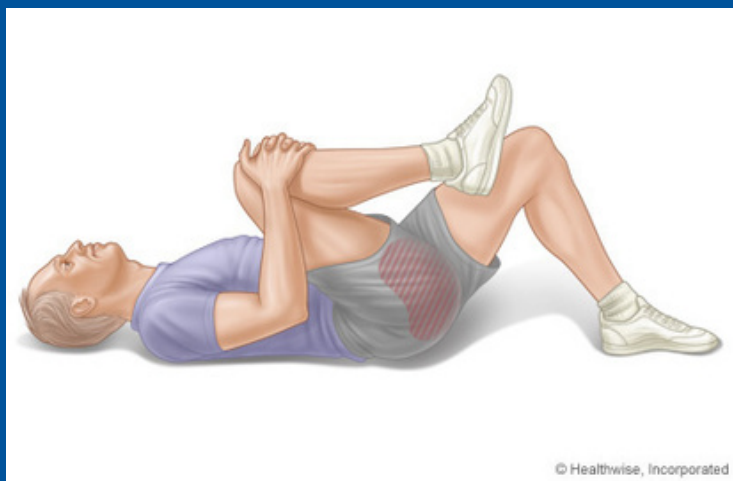
Ankle pumps



Heel slides



Knee to chest



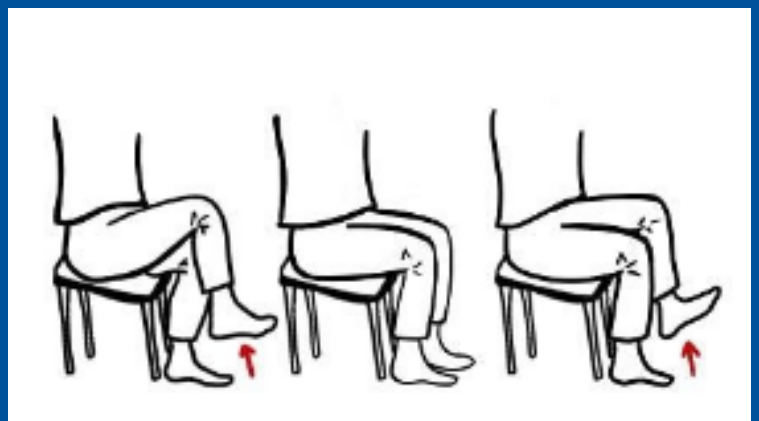
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SITTING

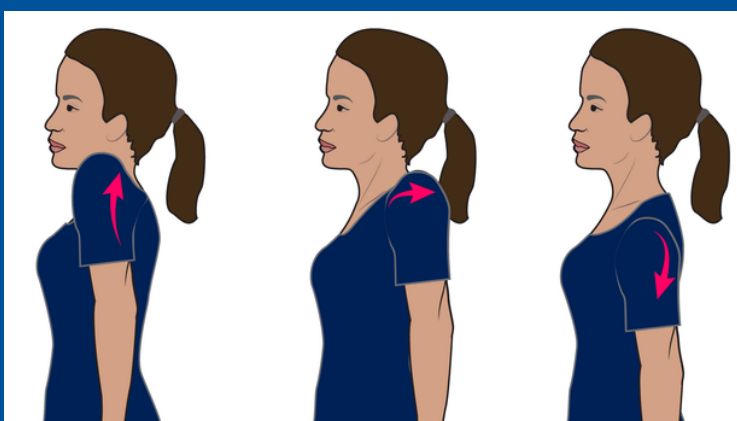
Knee extension



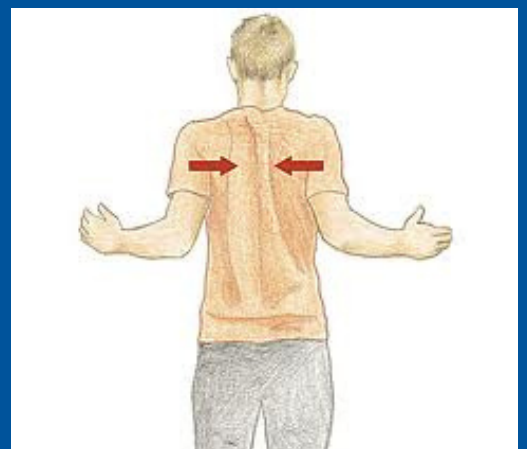
Sitting marches



Shoulder rolls

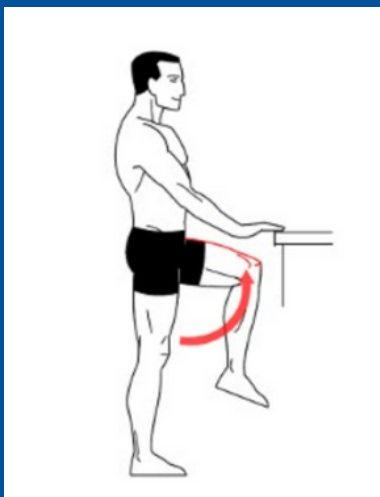


Scapular squeezes



STANDING

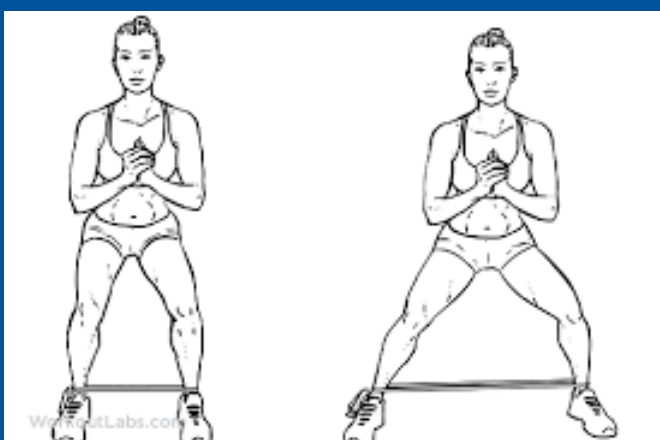
Standing marches



Sit-to-stands



Sidestepping



Mini-squats

