

Approximate Recovery Times in Weeks for Elective Spinal Operations

The following is a guide for recovery times following spinal surgery. It is important to note that recovery times will vary between patients and that this is only a guide.

	Lumbar Microdiscectomy	Lumbar Microdecompression	Multilevel Lumbar Decompression
Wound Healing	2 to 4	2 to 4	2 to 4
Office / Desk Job	4 to 6+	4 to 6+	6+
Manual labouring Job	6+	6+	6 to 12
Driving	Approximately 6 weeks when you are comfortable getting into and out of a car, can turn your body to look out of the back window and can safely perform an emergency stop.		
Walking	As soon as able. This is an excellent form of gentle exercise to aid your recovery. It is important to slowly pace yourself and build up distances gradually.		
Showering	Initially the wound should be covered by a waterproof dressing whilst taking brief showers. Once it has healed fully longer showers and bathing are permitted.		
Housework	When comfortable. Avoid bending at the back and use your knees. Avoid twisting when hoovering and when ironing make sure the board is set at an appropriate level or you can sit down to iron.		
Lifting	Lifting light objects and shopping can be performed when comfort allows. Avoid bending at the back and use your knees. Use both arms to carry shopping and avoid carrying for long periods.		
Swimming	Your wound must have healed fully before you can swim. If you have been fused please wait until you have had a follow up X-Ray. In line strokes are best following lumbar spine surgery (front crawl and back stroke).		
Gardening	6+	6+	6+
Cycling	6+	6+	6+
Racquet sports, golf, cricket, jogging	6+	6+	12+
Yoga, Pilates, tai chi, aerobics, gentle aerobic gym activity	6+	6+	6+
Weight lifting, contact sports (including football and rugby)	12+	12+	12+

	Lumbar Decompression and Fusion	Fusions: PLF / TLIF / XLIF / ALIF*	Anterior Cervical Discectomy and Fusion	Posterior Cervical Decompression and Fusion
Wound Healing	2 to 4	2 to 4	1 to 2	2 to 4
Office / Desk Job	6+	6+	4 to 6	6+
Manual labouring Job	12+	12+	12+	12+
Driving	Approximately 6 weeks when you are comfortable getting into and out of a car, can turn your body to look out of the back window and can safely perform an emergency stop.			
Walking	As soon as able. This is an excellent form of gentle exercise to aid your recovery. It is important to slowly pace yourself and build up distances gradually.			
Showering	Initially the wound should be covered by a waterproof dressing whilst taking brief showers. Once it has healed fully longer showers and bathing are permitted.			
Housework	When comfortable. Avoid bending at the back and use your knees. Avoid twisting when hoovering and when ironing make sure the board is set at an appropriate level or you can sit down to iron.			
Lifting	Lifting light objects and shopping can be performed when comfort allows. Avoid bending at the back and use your knees. Use both arms to carry shopping and avoid carrying for long periods.			
Swimming	Your wound must have healed fully before you can swim. If you have been fused please wait until you have had a follow up X-Ray. In line strokes are best following lumbar spine surgery (front crawl and back stroke).			
Gardening	12+	12+	12+	12+
Cycling	6+	6+	6+	6+
Racquet sports, golf, cricket, jogging	12-24+**	12-24+**	12+	12+
Yoga, Pilates, tai chi, aerobics, gentle aerobic gym activity	12+**	12+**	12+**	12+**
Weight lifting, contact sports (including football and rugby)	26-52 (if at all)**	26-52 (if at all)**	26-52 (if at all)**	26-52 (if at all)**

* PLF = Posterolateral Fusion, TLIF = Transforaminal Lumbar Interbody Fusion, XLIF = Extreme Lateral Interbody Fusion, ALIF = Anterior Lumbar Interbody Fusion

** After discussion with your surgeon