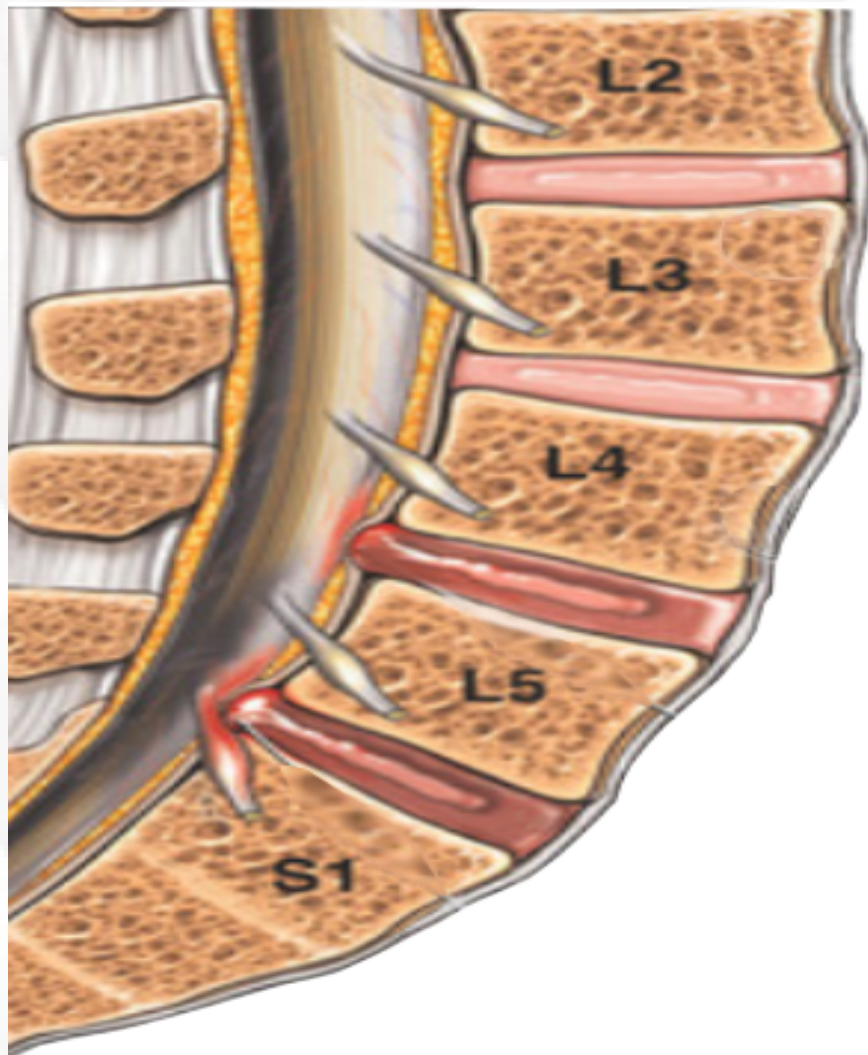


Lumbar Laminectomy



Patient Handout

Date: December 7, 2023

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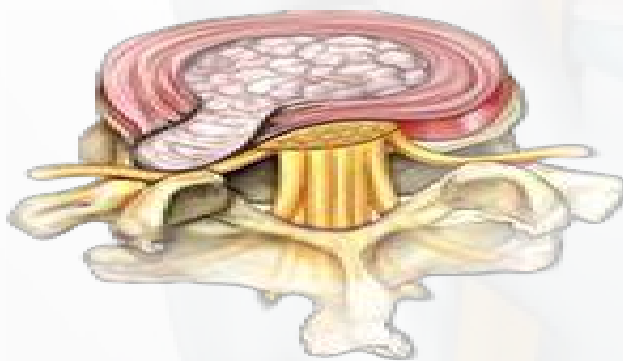
1 What is Lumbar Laminectomy?

Lumbar laminectomy is a surgical procedure that helps relieve pain and pressure in your lower back. It's important to understand what this procedure involves so you can make informed decisions about your health. In this handout, we will explain lumbar laminectomy in simple terms that you can easily understand. Lumbar laminectomy is a surgery done on the lower part of your spine, which is called the lumbar spine. Imagine your spine as a stack of building blocks. Each block is called a vertebra, and they are stacked on top of each other to form your spine. In between the vertebrae are soft cushions called discs. The part of the vertebra that covers and protects the back of your spinal cord and nerves is called the "lamina." Sometimes, due to conditions like spinal stenosis or herniated discs, the lamina and ligaments it contains can put pressure on the nerves, causing pain, numbness, or weakness in your legs. During a lumbar laminectomy, the surgeon removes a portion of the lamina and ligaments. This removal creates more space around your nerves, relieving the pressure and reducing the symptoms you've been experiencing. Think of it like taking part of the roof off a convertible to create more room for the nerves to breathe.

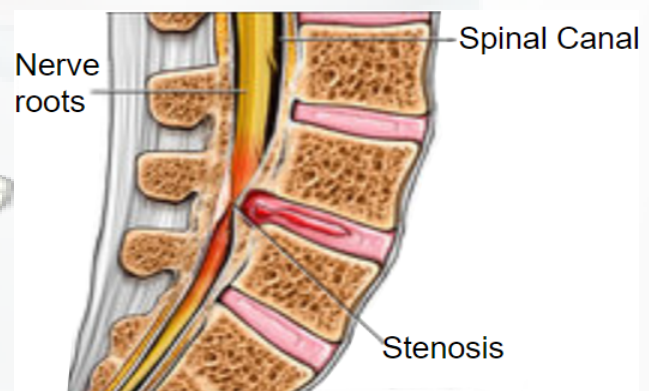
2 Why is Lumbar Laminectomy Performed?

Your surgeon will recommend a Lumbar Laminectomy based on your individual medical condition and symptoms. In general, Lumbar laminectomy is performed to relieve pressure on spinal nerves that can be caused by various lumbar spine conditions such as:

- **Spinal Stenosis:** When the spinal canal becomes narrow, it can squeeze the nerves. Laminectomy widens the canal to relieve this pressure.
- **Herniated Disc:** Sometimes, the soft cushion between your vertebrae (disc) can bulge or herniate, pressing on nerves. Removing part of the lamina can free up space and ease the pressure.
- **Tumors:** In some cases, tumors may grow in the spine, and a laminectomy can help the surgeon access and remove them.



Herniated Disc Compressing a Spinal Nerve

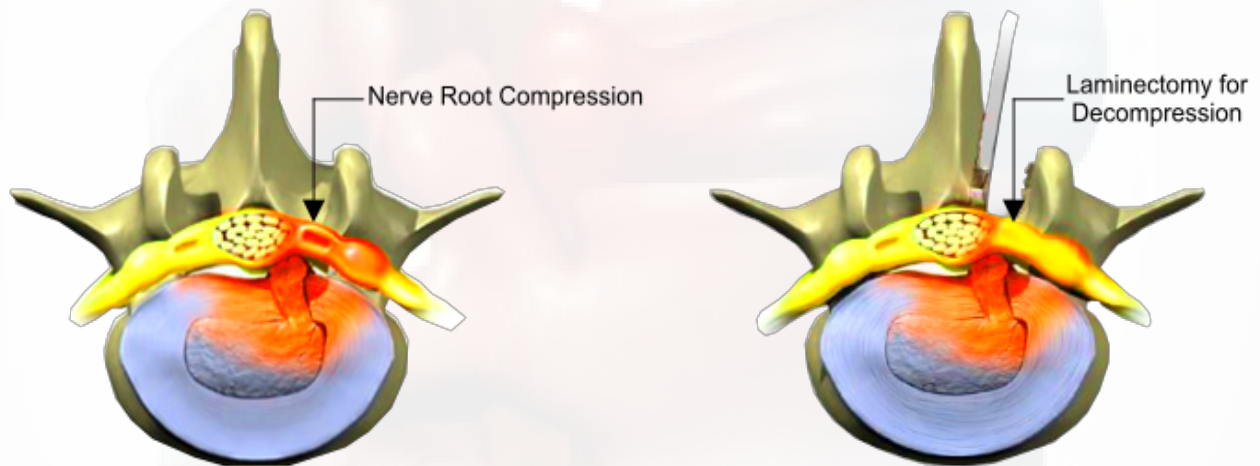


Lumbar Stenosis

3 Procedure Overview

The key steps of the procedure include:

1. **Incision:** To access the spine, your surgeon will make a small incision in your lower back. The size and location of the incision will depend on your specific condition and the surgical approach chosen by your surgeon.
2. **Lamina Removal:** The surgeon will carefully remove a portion of the lamina. This step is done to create more space in the spinal canal and relieve the pressure on the nerves. The amount of lamina removed will depend on the extent of your condition.
3. **Nerve Decompression:** If there are herniated discs or bone spurs pressing on the nerves, your surgeon will gently remove them to free up space and alleviate compression. This step aims to reduce pain, numbness, and other symptoms caused by nerve compression.
4. **Closure:** The incision is closed with sutures and/or surgical glue.



Laminectomy

4 Benefits and Risks of Your Operation

4.1 Benefits Lumbar Laminectomy :

Lumbar Laminectomy offers several potential benefits for your health and well-being, including:

- **Symptom Relief:** The surgery aims to alleviate leg pain, numbness, and weakness caused by nerve compression. You may experience significant relief from these discomforts by addressing the underlying issue.
- **Improved Function:** Successful Lumbar Laminectomy can enhance your lower back and leg function, allowing you to perform daily tasks and enjoy activities without pain.
- **Prevention of Further Damage:** By addressing the herniated disc, the surgery can prevent or reduce further nerve damage, possibly preventing long-term problems with pain, decreased movement, or sensation changes.
- **Enhanced Quality of Life:** Pain relief and restored mobility can lead to an improved quality of life, increased well-being, and better overall health.

Your surgeon will discuss how these potential benefits specifically apply to your individual medical condition and circumstances.

4.2 Risks of Not Undergoing the Operation:

Choosing not to undergo Lumbar Laminectomy surgery may have certain risks and consequences, that you should carefully consider:

- **Persistent Symptoms:** Some symptoms, such as those from nerve root irritation, often but not always improve on their own. Persistent symptoms could impact your comfort and ability to perform daily activities.
- **Irreversible Nerve Damage:** Ongoing nerve compression for a very extended period can lead to progressive symptoms that may be less likely to recover if left untreated.
- **Limited Mobility:** Untreated lumbar spine problems can limit lower back and leg mobility, affecting your ability to engage in various activities.
- **Reduced Quality of Life:** Persistent symptoms can diminish your overall quality of life, impacting daily enjoyment and participation in social and recreational activities.

4.3 Risks of Lumbar Laminectomy :

While Lumbar Laminectomy is generally safe, like any surgery, it carries potential risks and complications, including:

- **Postoperative Sensory Changes:** You may experience abnormal sensations like tingling, numbness, or even nerve pain after surgery. Typically this improves and often resolves as you heal, but on rare occasions can be permanent.
- **Symptom Recurrence:** Depending on the nature of your disease, there is a chance your symptoms could return or persist and require further surgery to treat. Your doctor will let you know how likely he or she expects that to be.
- **Destabilizing the Spine:**By removing some of the bone around the spine, there is a risk that the spine's normal structure could be compromised, leading to new problems in the future that might require a fusion surgery to treat.
- **Dural Tear:** In rare cases, there may be a tear in the covering around the spinal cord, called the dura, which can lead to cerebrospinal fluid leakage. This can often be fixed during surgery but might require additional procedures to address and prevent a future infection.
- **Back Pain:** Some patients may experience temporary back pain, which usually improves with time and rehabilitation but can be permanent.
- **Nerve Root Damage:** There is a slight risk of nerve injury during surgery, which can lead to temporary or, rarely, long-term nerve-related symptoms, such as pain, weakness, or numbness.
- **Deep or Superficial Wound Infection:** Occasionally, an infection can occur at the incision site or even the tissues of the spine, which might need to be treated with antibiotics and/or surgery.

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- **Bleeding or Hematoma:** In rare cases, there may be bleeding or a collection of blood near the surgical area, which may need to be removed surgically to address pressure on the nerves.
 - **Cauda Equina Syndrome:** In extremely rare instances, a condition called Cauda Equina Syndrome may occur, which requires immediate medical attention and can cause severe back pain, weakness, and bowel or bladder dysfunction.
 - **Other medical complications** such as sepsis, heart attack, pulmonary embolism, or stroke may happen.
 - **Death:** Although extremely rare, it's important to note that, like any surgery, there is a small risk of complications that can be life-threatening.

Please note that this list is not exhaustive, and there are other very rare complications that can be difficult to anticipate. It is crucial to have an open and thorough discussion with your healthcare provider to fully understand the potential risks and benefits of Lumbar Laminectomy surgery versus not undergoing the recommended procedure. Your surgeon can provide personalized guidance based on your medical condition and help you make an informed decision about your treatment options. If you have questions about any of these risks, it is important to discuss your concerns with your surgeon. It is also important to follow pre-operative and post-operative instructions diligently to minimize risks.

5 Expectations

5.1 In the Hospital

- You will be closely monitored by medical staff.
- Pain management will be provided.
- Physical therapy and mobility exercises may be started.
- Your surgeon will determine when you can be discharged based on your progress. Most patients either go home the same day or the day after surgery. Occasionally, a longer stay is necessary.

5.2 Recovery

- Recovery times vary, but most patients return to normal activities gradually over several weeks.
- By 6 weeks after surgery, most patients feel nearly back to normal and have resumed most of their normal activities.
- Temporary limitations may include avoiding heavy lifting, long-time driving, and certain activities.
- Follow your surgeon's guidance for a smooth recovery process.

5.3 Warning Signs After Surgery:

- Redness or drainage at the incision site
- Fever above 101 F
- Severe leg weakness or numbness
- Loss of bowel or bladder control
- Swelling or pain in your legs

6 Note

This handout only provides a general overview of Lumbar Laminectomy . Your healthcare team will provide personalized information and guidance based on your specific condition, comorbidities, and needs. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to ask your surgeon or medical provider.