Discharge Instructions for Lumbar Laminectomy Patients

You had a surgical procedure called a lumbar laminectomy. During this procedure, Dr. Porter made an incision on your low back so that the lamina (a piece) of one or more lumbar vertebra bones could be removed. This surgery is usually used to relieve the pressure on the spinal nerves compressed due to lumbar stenosis (narrowing of the space where the spinal nerves travel through the bone). A laminectomy may also be used to allow access to remove tumors or herniated discs. These instructions provide additional information regarding your care at home.

Incision Care
- You may shower with mild soap and shampoo daily. Gently wash your incision and pat dry. *This is the only time you may touch your incision.*
- Do not apply ointments, lotions, or creams to your incision.
- Apply an ice pack or a clean bag of frozen peas to your incision every 30 minutes to help reduce swelling and discomfort, as needed.
- Do not use a hot tub, go swimming, or take a bath until your incisions are completely healed (about 4 weeks for most people).
- Stop smoking, as this delays healing and may cause an infection.

Activity
- Start with light activity around the house for the first 3 days you are home.
- Gradually increase your activity starting with short walks 1-2 times per day.
- Allow your body time to heal by resting for short periods during the day.
- Avoid contact sports, skating, bike riding, or other such activities for 6 weeks.
- You may not drive until cleared by your neurosurgeon.
- Avoid lifting, pushing, or pulling heavy objects (more than 10 pounds) for 6-12 weeks.
- Avoid bending over or twisting to pick things up.
- Avoid sitting in soft chairs or slumping while you are sitting.
- Be sure to get up and move around / stretch every 30 minutes while sitting.

Nutrition
- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables to prevent constipation.

Medications
- Take your medications as prescribed and gradually decrease pain medications as your pain improves.
Follow-up
- If you have not already been scheduled for a follow-up appointment, call your neurosurgeon when you get home to schedule your follow-up appointment.
- Follow up with your primary care physician for all medical issues.

Call your doctor or return to the emergency room if you experience any of the following symptoms:
- A fever above 100 degrees F
- Difficulty moving or weakness of your legs
- Redness, swelling, odor, or drainage at your incision site
- Increased or uncontrolled pain of the back or legs
- No bowel movement in 3 days
- Difficulty feeling your legs
- Difficulty walking
- Any other questions or concerns