

# After surgery for a slipped disc in the lower back (lumbar discectomy)

After spine surgery



Count the weeks from the day of your operation. The date is on your discharge card.

If your doctor wrote a different plan on your prescription, follow that instead of this page.

## Weeks 0–2

Walk from the day after the operation: short walks, often, a little further each day. To get out of bed, roll onto your side first, then push up with your arms. Sit for no more than 20–30 minutes at a time, then walk or lie down. Keep the wound dry until the stitches are out.

**Weight bearing Full. Walk as much as is comfortable.**



### Walking

Walk in short blocks. Sit before the pain builds, then carry on.

**Little and often**

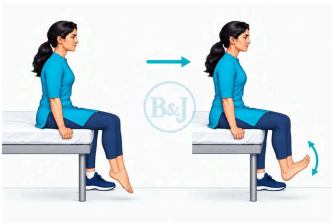
**Every day**

✓ **Should feel**

Distance building slowly

✗ **Should not feel**

Pushing through heavy legs



### Ankle pumps

Pump the feet up and down to keep the blood moving.

**20 times**

**Every hour while awake**

✓ **Should feel**

The calf working

✗ **Should not feel**

Calf pain or swelling — tell us



### Scan for this sheet

Listen to it read aloud, in English, हिंदी or मराठी — or ask for sheet 90

**Nallasopara West** 87665 22099 · 12–2 pm, 7.30–9.30 pm

**Virar East** 92702 84859 · 5.30–7.30 pm

Monday to Saturday · Sunday by prior appointment only



### Core brace

Lie on your back, knees bent. Tighten the tummy gently as if bracing for a poke. Keep breathing.

**Hold 10 seconds**

**10 times**

**✓ Should feel**

A firm, gentle tension

**X Should not feel**

Holding your breath



### Pelvic tilt

Lie on your back, knees bent. Flatten the small of your back into the floor by tilting the pelvis.

**10 times**

**2 times a day**

**✓ Should feel**

The lower tummy muscles working

**X Should not feel**

Increasing back pain

**Not yet** Bending forward to lift, twisting, lifting anything heavier than a full glass of water, or driving. Sitting on the floor, squatting or using an Indian toilet — until we have told you it is safe.

**Move to the next stage only after we have seen you, and the X-ray if one was planned.**



### Scan for this sheet

Listen to it read aloud, in English, हिंदी or मराठी — or ask for **sheet 90**

**Nallasopara West** 87665 22099 · 12–2 pm, 7.30–9.30 pm

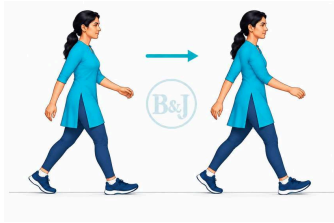
**Virar East** 92702 84859 · 5.30–7.30 pm

Monday to Saturday · Sunday by prior appointment only

## Weeks 2–6

Stitches out. Walk longer each day, building up to 30 minutes. Start the gentle back exercises. Carry on with the earlier exercises.

### Weight bearing Full.



#### Walking

Weight-bearing walking loads the bone and helps it stay strong.

**30 minutes**

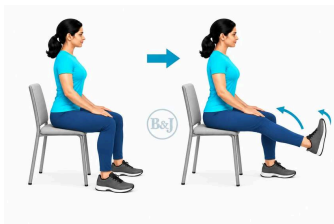
**Most days**

✓ **Should feel**

Comfortable exercise

✗ **Should not feel**

Sudden back pain — stop and tell us



#### Sciatic nerve glide

Sit tall. Straighten one knee and pull the toes up, then bend it back. Move gently — this is a glide, not a stretch.

**10 times**

**3 times a day**

✓ **Should feel**

A gentle pulling down the leg

✗ **Should not feel**

Sharp or lasting increase in leg pain



#### Bridging

Lie on your back, knees bent. Lift your hips off the floor, hold, then lower.

**10 times**

**2 times a day**

✓ **Should feel**

The buttocks and back of thighs working

✗ **Should not feel**

Cramp, or back pain



#### Scan for this sheet

Listen to it read aloud, in English, हिंदी or मराठी — or ask for sheet 90

**Nallasopara West** 87665 22099 · 12–2 pm, 7.30–9.30 pm

**Virar East** 92702 84859 · 5.30–7.30 pm

Monday to Saturday · Sunday by prior appointment only



### Knee to chest

Lie on your back. Bring one knee up towards your chest, hold, then lower slowly.

**Hold 15 seconds**

**5 each side**

**✓ Should feel**

A stretch in the lower back and  
buttock

**X Should not feel**

Leg pain getting worse

**Not yet** Heavy lifting, bending and twisting together, or riding a two-wheeler. Sitting on the floor, squatting or using an Indian toilet — until we have told you it is safe.

**Move to the next stage only after we have seen you, and the X-ray if one was planned.**



#### Scan for this sheet

Listen to it read aloud, in English, हिंदी or  
मराठी — or ask for  
**sheet 90**

**Nallasopara West** 87665 22099 · 12–2 pm, 7.30–9.30 pm

**Virar East** 92702 84859 · 5.30–7.30 pm

Monday to Saturday · Sunday by prior appointment only

## Weeks 6–12

Build core strength and go back to work: desk work sooner, heavy manual work usually at about 3 months. Lift with the knees bent and the load close to the body. Carry on with the earlier exercises.

### Weight bearing Full.



#### Bird dog

On hands and knees, stretch one arm forward and the opposite leg back. Keep the back still.

**Hold 5 seconds**

**8 each side**

##### ✓ Should feel

The back and tummy working together

##### ✗ Should not feel

The back arching or twisting



#### Cat and cow

On hands and knees, arch the back up, then let it sag down. Move slowly between the two.

**10 times**

**2 times a day**

##### ✓ Should feel

The spine moving freely

##### ✗ Should not feel

Sharp pain at either end



#### Single-leg balance

Stand on one leg beside a worktop. Balance prevents falls, and preventing falls prevents fractures.

**30 seconds**

**3 times a day**

##### ✓ Should feel

Working to stay steady

##### ✗ Should not feel

Losing balance — hold on

**Not yet** Heavy lifting from the floor until we clear you.



#### Scan for this sheet

Listen to it read aloud, in English, हिंदी or मराठी — or ask for **sheet 90**

**Nallasopara West** 87665 22099 · 12–2 pm, 7.30–9.30 pm

**Virar East** 92702 84859 · 5.30–7.30 pm

Monday to Saturday · Sunday by prior appointment only

## Stop and telephone us if

- Loss of control of urine or stools, or numbness between the legs — go to the hospital the same day
- New weakness in the leg or foot, or the foot drops when you walk
- The leg pain comes back suddenly and badly
- Watery fluid leaking from the wound, or a headache that is worse when you sit up
- Wound redness, discharge or fever
- Sudden breathlessness, chest pain, or a swollen, painful calf — go to the nearest hospital



### Scan for this sheet

Listen to it read aloud, in English, हिंदी or मराठी — or ask for  
**sheet 90**

**Nallasopara West** 87665 22099 · 12–2 pm, 7.30–9.30 pm

**Virar East** 92702 84859 · 5.30–7.30 pm

Monday to Saturday · Sunday by prior appointment only