

SPINAL DECOMPRESSION SURGERY

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What are the risks of spinal decompression surgery?

Recovering from spinal decompression surgery



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Spinal Decompression Surgery

Spinal decompression surgery is a general term that refers to various procedures intended to relieve symptoms caused by pressure, or compression, on the spinal cord and/or nerve roots. Bulging or collapsed disks, thickened joints, loosened ligaments and bony growths can narrow the spinal canal and the spinal nerve openings (foramen), causing irritation.

Symptoms of spinal nerve compression include:

- Pain
- Numbness
- Tingling
- Weakness
- Unsteadiness

In severe cases, pressure on the spinal nerves can cause paralysis and problems with bladder and/or bowel function.

The following are common techniques for decompression:

Diskectomy

This involves removing a portion of a disk to relieve pressure on the nearby nerve roots.

Laminotomy Or Laminectomy

These procedures involve removing a small part of the bony arches of the spinal canal, called the lamina. During a laminotomy, just a section of the lamina is removed. During a laminectomy, the entire lamina is removed. Removing the lamina increases the size of the spinal canal, relieving pressure.

Foraminotomy Or Foraminectomy

Both procedures are performed to expand the openings for the nerve roots to exit the spinal cord by removing some bone and other tissue. A foraminectomy generally refers to a procedure that removes a large amount of bone and tissue.

Osteophyte Removal

This involves removing bony growths called osteophytes or bone spurs.

Corpectomy

This is surgery to remove the body of a vertebra, as well as the disks.

A combination of techniques may be used; and in some cases, fusion of the vertebrae also is needed to stabilize the spine.

What are the risks of spinal decompression surgery?

The risks associated with spinal decompression surgery include:

- Infection
- Bleeding
- Blood clots
- Nerve or tissue damage
- Allergic reaction to anesthesia

Recovering from spinal decompression surgery

You will stay in the hospital for four or five days, depending on the extent of your surgery. You will be given medication to control pain. Rehabilitation may be lengthy and will likely include a program of physical therapy.

Is decompression surgery successful?

Surgery to relieve pressure on the nerve roots is successful in relieving pain in 80% to 90% of patients. Surgery does not correct the underlying degeneration of the vertebrae due to wear and tear of aging, however, so a return of symptoms is possible.

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