



Back Care After Surgery

To help you as you recover

Your doctors advise regular exercise as part of your recovery. Talk with your doctor about the details of your exercise program.

This handout tells you what you should and should not do while recovering after surgery. It also shows a basic exercise program and how to increase your activities safely.

Add or Keep Exercise in Your Routine

People who get regular exercise are less likely to have their back problems reoccur.

Exercise Can Help You:

- Lessen your back pain
- Increase your endurance
- Keep mobility and muscle tone
- Control your blood pressure
- Lose weight
- Reduce boredom

What to Expect After Surgery

Day 1

- Eat all meals sitting up in a chair
- Start exercise as you are able

Day 2

- Walk in the hallway 3 times
- Get in and out of a flat bed
- Family training, as needed, so they can help you at home
- Use the toilet by yourself

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Day 3

- Take a shower by yourself
- Walk a full loop around the unit or 400 feet without using a device, if you did not use one before your surgery
- Walk up and down stairs to practice, as needed, for home

Pain

Ask your nurse for cold packs to help with pain control. Use these every other hour as needed.

Precautions After Spinal Surgery

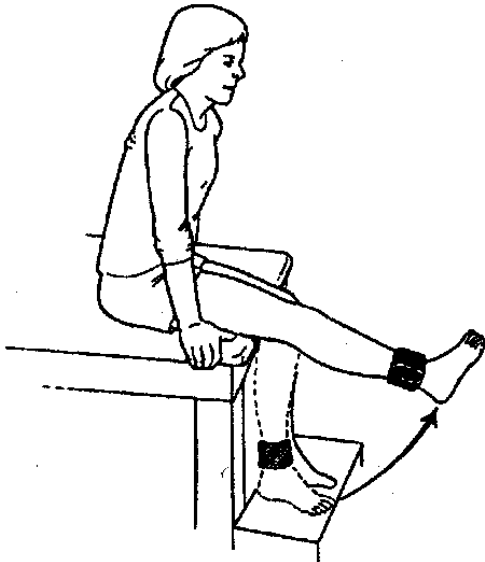
- Change your sitting and standing posture often by using a stool or adjusting your seat. Keep your back straight.
- Kneel, instead of bending over or squatting for a long time.
- Do **not** twist your body.
- Organize your home and work environment to prevent tripping or slipping. For example, remove throw rugs or put a non-skid surface in the tub.
- Do not lift more than 10 pounds until your doctor says it is OK.
- Ask your doctor when it is OK for you to:
 - Drive
 - Resume sports
 - Return to work
- Ask for help when needed.
- When getting out of bed, do a “log roll.” Do not twist your body.
- Avoid straining while using the bathroom. Drink plenty of water, eat fiber, and keep moving!
- Avoid bending forward too much. When putting on socks and shoes, lift each foot onto the opposite knee so that you can reach it without bending.
- Ask your physical therapist for ideas on how to get dressed and undressed if you have pain and cannot move as usual.

Your Home Exercise Program

Your home exercise program will include walking and these exercises. Later, your doctor or physical therapist will suggest other exercises and activities.

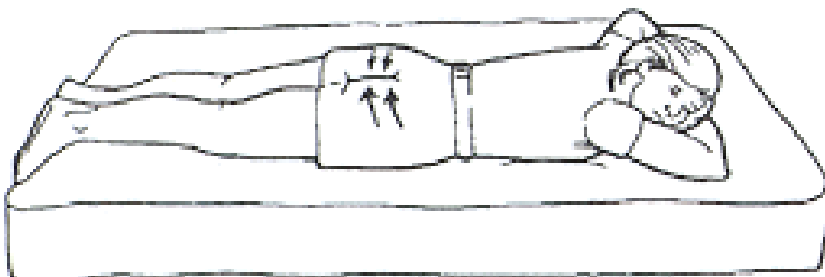
Knee Extension

1. Sit on the edge of a bed or sturdy table.
2. Straighten your knee all the way, hold 1 second, then slowly lower your foot.
3. Repeat 10 times, 2 times a day.



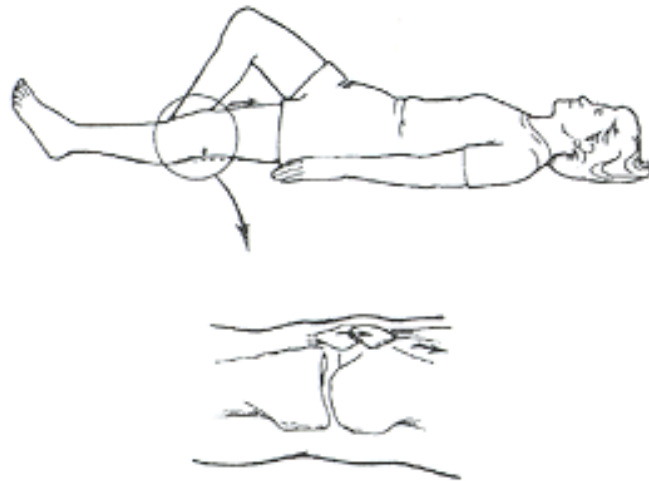
Glut Sets

1. Lie on your back or stomach, whichever is more comfortable.
2. Squeeze your buttocks together.
3. Hold for 5 seconds, then slowly relax.
4. Repeat 10 times 2 times a day



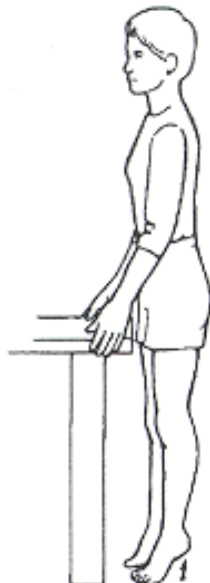
Quad Sets

1. Sit or lie on your back with your leg straight.
2. Press the back of your knee downward. This will tighten the muscle on top of your thigh and will move your kneecap, as shown in the 2nd drawing below.
3. Hold for 5 seconds.
4. Repeat 10 times 2 times a day.



Heel Raises

1. Stand with your feet 12 inches apart.
2. Raise up slowly onto your toes as high as you can.
3. Hold 5 seconds.
4. Repeat 10 times, 2 times a day.



Questions?

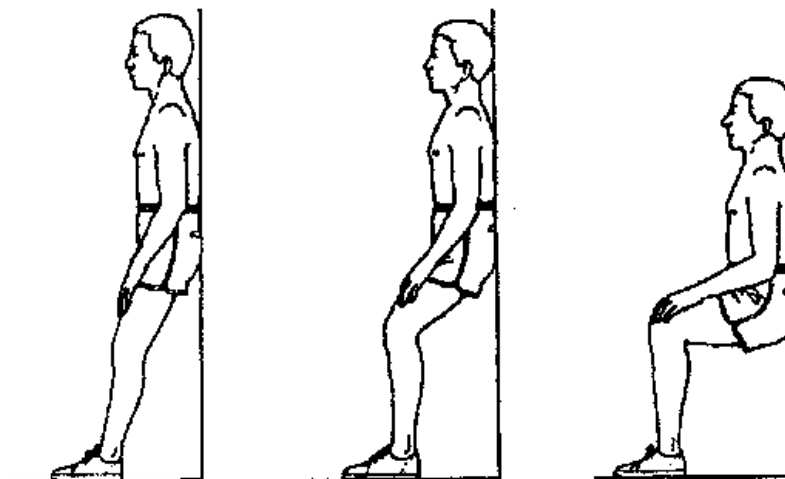
Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help.

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Wall Slide

1. With your back against a wall, slide down into a partial squatting position. Hold onto a chair for balance, as needed.
2. Stand up straight.
3. Repeat 10 times, 2 times a day.



Walking

When you get home:

- Begin walking for about 6 to 7 minutes at a time, or the distance you walked in the hospital.
- Start on flat ground.
- Increase the amount of time that you walk by 1 to 2 minutes each day.
- Slowly work up to walking at least 30 minutes 3 to 5 times a week.

When to Call Your Doctor

Call your doctor if:

- Your incision becomes red, swollen, tender, “squishy,” or begins to drain.
- You have a fever of 101° F (38.3° C) or higher.
- You have nausea or are vomiting.
- You cannot take your medicine (for any reason).

Be sure to ask your doctor at your 2- or 6-week follow-up visit about starting physical therapy as an outpatient.

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