

# Open Microlumbar Laminectomy & Discectomy

## What is it?

Open microlumbar laminotomy/discectomy is an operation performed on the lower spine to relieve pressure on one or more nerve roots. The operation is usually performed under general anesthesia or a spinal anesthetic. Frequently it is performed as an inpatient but if the patient is stoic and doctor agrees it can be performed as an outpatient procedure. A catheter may be placed in your bladder if the surgery is planned to take a long time.

## Why Is It Done?

When an intervertebral disc ruptures in the lumbar spine, it puts pressure on one or more nerve roots (often called nerve root compression). This causes pain and other symptoms in the neck, arms, and even legs. In this operation, the surgeon reaches the lumbar spine through a small incision in the low back. After the muscles of the spine are stripped from the vertebral bone the nerve root is exposed by removing part of the bony covering (lamina), which covers the nerve root. This is called a laminotomy. Usually as much as possible of the abnormal intervertebral disc is then removed taking the pressure off of the nerve root. Since the spinal canal is opened there may be post-operative scar formation which can cause delayed recurrent nerve pain. Since much of the nuclear material is removed from the center of the disc, delayed vertical instability with disc space collapse frequently will occur.

## What Happens Afterwards?

At home you will have to take narcotic medication to help with any discomfort. Any severe increase in pain not controlled with the medication should also be reported to your physician or the physician's nurse. You should report any elevation in your temperature, drainage from you incision, or increase in numbness or weakness.

Successful recovery from an open lumbar laminotomy/discectomy requires that you approach the operation and recovery period with confidence based on a thorough understanding of the indications, alternatives, and risks of your procedure. The better informed you are the better prepared you will be for the post operative period. Do not hesitate to ask questions and be certain that you clearly understand the answers. Your body will work to heal the involved muscle, nerve, and bone tissues but since muscle is stripped and bone removed it takes months for the deep scar healing. Full recovery, however, will also depend on you having a strong, positive attitude, setting small goals for improvement, and working steadily to accomplish each goal.