

Lumbar Decompression

The essence of this operation is to relieve the compression on the lumbar nerves. The compression may be caused by a disc, enlarged joints in the back due to osteoarthritis, thickened ligaments or a combination of all of the above. Such compression causes pain down the leg and the operation is designed to improve the leg pain by removing the pressure on the nerve.

This operation is performed under general anaesthesia and you will not be aware of any events during the procedure. You will be sent to sleep with an injection and be placed on your tummy. A small incision of about an inch to two inches is placed in the middle of the back and the spinal column is reached with minimal disturbance to the muscles. The surgery entails removal of any

compression on the nerves which may include partial removal of the disc if found prolapsed. The surgery takes around 45 minutes to an hour depending upon the number of levels of compression.

Following surgery you will be mobilised fairly quickly and will leave the hospital once you are able to negotiate steps. There is no need for formal physiotherapy and all activities within reason are encouraged. You can expect to be out of hospital in a day or two and be able to drive soon after that. You can return to jobs requiring light physical tasks in about four weeks. Heavy lifting in excess of 15kg is not recommended following this surgery but swimming and cycling are actively encouraged. The operation is relatively straightforward,

nonetheless you need to be aware of certain complications such as infection, headache due to CSF (fluid around the spinal cord) leak with nausea and very rarely weakness in the legs. After discharge arrangements will be made for a district nurse to check your scar in a week or two and you will be reviewed by your surgeon's team in 6 weeks.

Lumbar decompression can help to improve pain down the leg by removing pressure on the nerve.

