

# LUMBAR LAMINECTOMY FOR SPINAL STENOSIS

This is a very common operation and is performed on patients with spinal stenosis – or more simply put, compression of the spinal cord (cauda equina) and the exiting nerve roots, usually in the lumbar spine. The condition usually occurs in the elderly and results in a reduced capacity to walk distances, a forward stooped posture (to help re-expand the dimension of the spinal canal) and variable amounts of pain in the buttocks and legs.

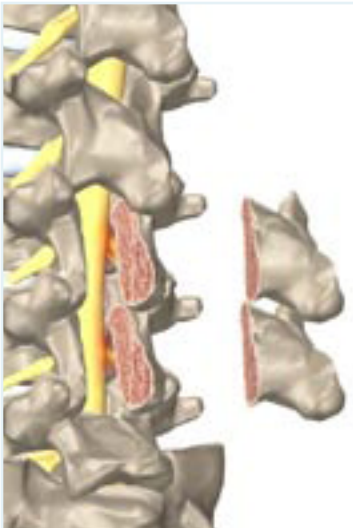
Under a general anaesthetic, the patient is safely placed on their front in a well cushioned position, with special care being given to the neck. A 10-12cm incision is made in the small of the back, just around the belt line. The muscles are gently peeled off the back of the lumbar spine. The back of the lumbar spinal bones (laminae) are carefully removed and any bone spurs that are squashing the nerves exiting to the legs are taken away. Usually, no spinal fusion is required, though this may be necessary if there is any spinal deformity (slippage of the back bones –“spondylolisthesis”).

Blood loss is usually minimal. With the new “cell saver” service, any blood lost during the operation can be recycled and allows for an auto-transfusion. Very few patients therefore require a banked blood donation.

Patients having this surgery usually have an epidural catheter placed into the surgical site at the end of the procedure. This offers good pain relief immediately after the surgery.

This surgery has the patient in hospital for around one week.

Physiotherapy is required in hospital and gradual improvement of leg muscle strength follows.



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