

POSTERIOR LUMBAR INTERBODY FUSION (PLIF)

TRANSFORAMINAL LUMBAR INTERBODY FUSION (TLIF)

A PLIF or TLIF procedure is a variation of a Lumbar Posterior Reconstruction and Fusion. In addition, this procedure includes a full discectomy of the collapsed and painful disc in the lumbar spine, a bone graft and usually a spacer ("cage") that holds open the lumbar disc space.

This adds a lot of structural support to the fusion and biomechanically adds support to the entire spinal column.

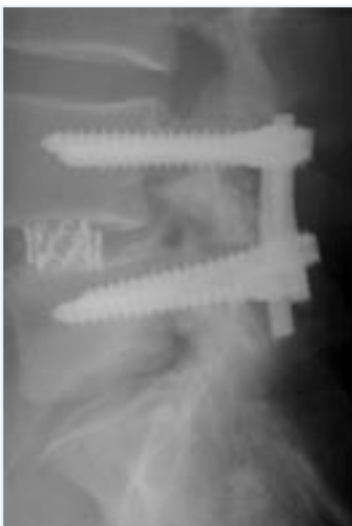
The technique is performed under general anaesthetic and has the patient face down in a safe and cushioned position. A 10-12cm incision is made in the small of the back. After the pedicle screws and rods are placed in the vertebral bones that are to be fused, the back of the disc on either one (TLIF) or both sides (PLIF) is exposed. Careful protection of the exiting nerve roots off the side of the spinal cord (cauda equina) is essential. The disc material is removed using special instruments, and usually a single cage, or a pair of cages is placed into the space where the disc once was. Bone graft fills the disc space and cages, and usually permits a solid fusion between the two vertebral bones being fused.

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.

Physiotherapy will be required in hospital.

The average stay in hospital for such patients is around one week.



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