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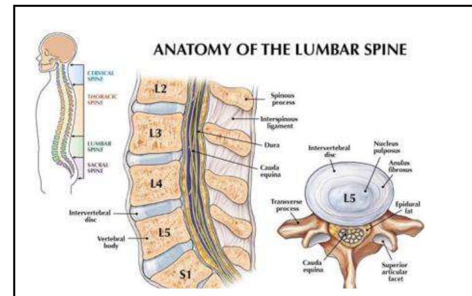
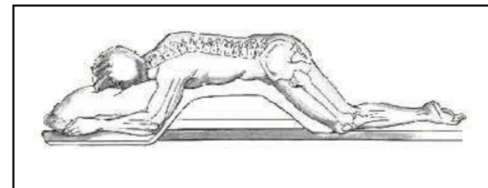
LUMBAR MICRODISCECTOMY

INDICATION FOR SURGERY

This surgery is indicated in those patients who have symptoms related to nerve root compression by a herniated lumbar disc. The surgery aims to remove the portion of the herniated disc causing compression on the nerve root. This surgery is indicated once conservative options have failed or if symptoms such as leg pain, numbness, pins, and needles and/or backpain are worsening. Surgery aims to reduce pressure on the nerves and therefore relieves symptoms.



SURGICAL PROCEDURE



The patient is given a general anaesthetic at the start of the procedure to stay asleep. To perform the operation, the patient is made to lie on the stomach so the surgeon can access you back. A small incision is made in the middle of the back. X-rays are used to confirm the correct level of surgery. Muscles are moved out of the way to expose the back of the bone of the spine. A small hole is made in the bone (lamina) to gain access to the spinal canal where the spinal nerves are. The spinal nerves are gently retracted out of the way. The part of the disc that is pushing on the nerve is removed. The muscle is then placed back into position, the skin is closed and a dressing is placed over the wound.

RISKS

Generally, this type of surgery is safe and major complications are uncommon. The chance of a minor complication is around 3 or 4%, and the risk of a major complication is 1 or 2%.

The risks involved with a lumbar microdiscectomy include: infection, bleeding, failure to improve symptoms, temporary or permanent nerve damage resulting in weakness/numbness, spinal fluid leak and recurrence of the disc herniation, bony instability, pressure areas from the operating rests and vision disturbance due to positioning for surgery.

All surgeries carry risks related to medication, operation or anaesthetic. Risks related to the anaesthetic depend on other medical issues and to the medications used and include heart and lung problems, clots in the lungs or legs etc. and death.

DISCHARGE AND HOME CARE

In most cases patients can walk a few hours after the operation. Patients can go home after being reviewed by the physiotherapist. The patient should be able to drink, eat and have normal bladder/bowel movement prior to discharge. Most patients go home 2 to 3 days after surgery.

You may require pain medications to help with the pain associated with the cut in your back. It may take weeks to feel normal. Pain can be controlled with tablet pain killers. Any other medications that have been stopped prior to surgery (such as blood thinners) should only be continued after discussion with the surgeon.

Activates such as heavy lifting, bending, twisting moving objects, prolonged sitting or standing should be avoided. Swimming should be avoided for three weeks after surgery. No heavy lifting for 12 weeks.

Patients should not drive if they are taking narcotic pills. They should limit driving to short trips and slowly extend driving time.

Patients may require anywhere between four to six weeks off work (depending on the nature of work).

WOUND CARE

The wound will be closed with dissolving stitches and reinforced with sticky paper strips. The wound must stay covered for 1 week and the dressing changed each day after showering. After one week, the dressing may be removed and left off. The paper strips will fall off over 1–2 weeks.

The wound should heal within two weeks from your surgery. Patients that have other medical problems such as: diabetes, people who need to take daily steroids for other conditions, and those people whose immune system may be compromised, may need additional time for their wounds to completely heal.

If there is any redness, tenderness, swelling or discharge of the wound, the patient should see their GP immediately.

FOLLOW UP

Dr. Shanu Gambhir would like to see the patient six weeks after the surgery for a post-operative review.