



## Procedure Information Sheet

### Introduction

This is a major surgery which utilizes a skin incision over the front of the body to approach the spine.

### Indication

- Degenerative conditions causing compression of spinal cord or spinal nerves, e.g. intervertebral disc prolapse, posterior vertebral body osteophytes.
- Instability of the spine.
- Spine fracture.
- Spinal tumour.
- Spinal infection (usually tuberculous or bacterial).
- Spinal deformity.
- Miscellaneous conditions causing spinal cord or spinal nerve damage.

### The Operation / Procedure

1. The skin incision is usually on one side in the front of the body.
2. Surgery is performed depending on individual patient.
3. A piece of bone will be harvested from the ilium, fibula or a rib to fill the defect at the spinal column (in special conditions synthetic material or allograft may be used).
4. Internal fixation devices such as plates and screws may be used if necessary.

### Before the Operation / Procedure

1. A written consent is required.
2. Fasting for 6 hours before operation.
3. Inform your doctors about drug allergy, your regular medications or other medical conditions.
4. Optimization of pre-existing medical conditions, e.g. heart disease, hypertension, diabetes mellitus, anaemia, asthma, etc.
5. Blood tests, ECG and X-rays of the appropriate regions before operation.

### After the Operation / Procedure

1. Usually diet is not allowed on the day after surgery. Intravenous fluid replacement may be necessary.
2. Analgesics will be prescribed for better pain control and facilitates rehabilitation.
3. Passing stool and urine will be arranged in bed in the lying position.  
Pre-operative practice is beneficial. Sometimes a urinary catheter is used for monitoring and convenience. Usually it will be removed in a few days.
4. Lower limb exercise is encouraged to reduce the risk of deep vein thrombosis.
5. Turning of body is usually allowed within few days after surgery and this will not affect wound healing.
6. Sit out with corset and walking exercise will be started according to the progress.
7. Drain(s) for removal of fluid might be inserted depending on necessity.
8. Keep the wound clean and dry.
9. If any excessive bleeding, collapse, severe pain or signs of infection at wound site such as redness, swelling or fever, consult doctor immediately

#### Patient's Label

Patient Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Hospital No: \_\_\_\_\_  
Episode No: \_\_\_\_\_



## Risk and Complication

### 1. General risks

- 1.1 Excessive bleeding causing shock, stroke, heart attack, etc., which may in turn leading to death.
- 1.2 Injury to the dura causing cerebrospinal fluid leakage or meningitis.
- 1.3 Delayed wound bleeding, haematoma formation and wound infection.
- 1.4 Problems in wound healing or persistent scar discomfort.
- 1.5 Deterioration of pre-existing medical problems, e.g. heart disease and stroke.
- 1.6 Loosening or breakage of internal fixation device.
- 1.7 Failure of bone union.
- 1.8 Problems with iliac crest bone graft donor site such as wound infection, haematoma or persistent ache.
- 1.9 Recurrence or deterioration of the original spine condition.
- 1.10 Ask the anaesthetist for details of anaesthetic complications.

### 2. Risks Specific to Operative Site

#### 2.1 Cervical spine surgery

- 2.1.1 Haematoma at surgical site causing compression of trachea, which may cause breathing difficulty or even suffocation.
- 2.1.2 Injury to the esophagus causing swallowing difficulty or even leakage of food into the mediastinum causing mediastinitis.
- 2.1.3 Injury to the major neck artery or vein causing stroke.
- 2.1.4 Injury to the thyroid gland causing thyroid hormone dysfunction.
- 2.1.5 Injury to the nerve supplying the vocal cord causing hoarseness of voice.
- 2.1.6 Injury to the cervical spinal cord or nerves causing neurological damage, in extreme case may lead to tetraplegia, double incontinence and breathing difficulty.

#### 2.2 Thoracic spine surgery

- 2.2.1 Injury to the esophagus causing swallowing difficulty or even leakage of food into the mediastinum causing mediastinitis.
- 2.2.2 Injury to the lung causing pneumonia or persistent pneumothorax.
- 2.2.3 Injury to the aorta or vena cava causing torrential bleeding.
- 2.2.4 Injury to lymphatic vessels causing chylothorax.
- 2.2.5 Injury to the thoracic spinal cord or nerves causing neurological damage, in extreme case may lead to paraplegia, double incontinence and breathing difficulty.

#### 2.3 Lumbosacral spine surgery

- 2.3.1 Reflex slowing of bowel movement causing abdominal distension and vomiting.
- 2.3.2 Injury to the aorta or vena cava causing torrential bleeding.
- 2.3.3 Injury to the abdominal structures, e.g. ureter, kidney, liver, bowel.
- 2.3.4 Injury to the sympathetic nerves causing dryness and increase in temperature of the involved lower limb. It may also cause erectile dysfunction and retrograde ejaculation in men.
- 2.3.5 Injury to the spinal nerves causing neurological damage, in extreme case may lead to paraplegia, double incontinence.

## Disclaimer

This leaflet only provides general information pertaining to this operation / procedure. While common risks and complications are described, the list is not exhaustive, and the degree of risk could also vary between patients. Please contact your doctor for detailed information and specific enquiry.

## Reference

Smart Patient Website of Hospital Authority, Procedure Information Sheet:  
Anterior Decompression and/or Spine Fusion (2017)

### Patient's Label

Patient Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Hospital No: \_\_\_\_\_

Episode No: \_\_\_\_\_

Patient's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_