

Recovery After Spine Surgery - Bombay Spine Clinic

Recovery After Spine Surgery

- Your Guide to a Safe and Successful Recovery
- Recovering after spine surgery is a gradual process. Every patient's recovery is unique and depends on:
 - The type of surgery performed
 - Your age and overall health
 - Your pre-operative fitness
 - The underlying spinal condition
 - Your commitment to rehabilitation
- At Bombay Spine Clinic™, our goal is not only to perform a successful surgery but also to help you return safely to your normal daily life.
- Modern spine surgery, particularly minimally invasive and endoscopic techniques, allows most patients to recover faster with less pain, earlier walking and shorter hospital stays.
- Remember, healing takes time. While pain often improves quickly, complete recovery of muscles, nerves and bone healing may continue for several months.
- Post-Operative Care Guide
 - The first few weeks after surgery are important for proper healing.
 - Our recovery programme focuses on:
 - Pain control
 - Early walking
 - Safe movement
 - Wound healing
 - Gradual return to daily activities
 - Strengthening and rehabilitation
 - Following your surgeon's advice carefully helps achieve the best possible outcome.
- Wound Care
 - Keeping the surgical wound clean and dry helps reduce the risk of infection.
 - General recommendations include:
 - Keep the dressing clean and dry.
 - Follow your surgeon's instructions regarding dressing changes.
 - Wash your hands before touching the wound.
 - Avoid applying powders, creams or herbal products unless advised.

- Do not scratch the wound even if mild itching occurs during healing.
- Most skin stitches are absorbable and do not require removal. If non-absorbable stitches or staples are used, they are usually removed after 10–14 days.
- Contact your surgeon immediately if you notice:
 - Increasing redness
 - Swelling
 - Persistent wound discharge
 - Fever
 - Increasing pain around the wound
- Pain After Surgery
- Some discomfort after surgery is completely normal.
- Pain usually improves gradually over the first few weeks.
- Your doctor may prescribe:
 - Pain-relieving medications
 - Anti-inflammatory medicines
 - Muscle relaxants
 - Medicines for nerve pain (if required)
- Take medications exactly as prescribed.
- Do not stop medicines suddenly or take additional medications without medical advice.
- Activity Restrictions
- Early movement is encouraged after spine surgery. However, certain activities should be avoided during the initial healing phase.
- For the first few weeks:
 - Avoid:
 - Heavy lifting
 - Sudden twisting movements
 - Repeated bending forward
 - High-impact exercise
 - Running and jumping
 - Sitting continuously for prolonged periods
 - Instead:
 - Walk regularly
 - Change your position frequently
 - Maintain good posture
 - Perform only the exercises recommended by your physiotherapist
- Gradually increasing your activity level is much safer than doing too much too soon.
- Walking Program
- Walking is one of the safest and most effective exercises after spine surgery.

- It helps:
- Improve blood circulation
- Reduce stiffness
- Strengthen muscles
- Prevent blood clots
- Improve confidence
- Accelerate recovery
- A typical walking programme is:
- Immediately After Surgery
- Walking inside the hospital under supervision.
- First Week
- Walking inside the house several times a day.
- After One Week
- Begin outdoor walking on level ground.
- Start with short distances and gradually increase the duration.
- Weeks 2–6
- Increase walking distance gradually.
- Aim for 30–45 minutes of comfortable walking daily, depending on your recovery and your surgeon's advice.
- Walking should be comfortable. If severe pain develops, stop the activity and consult your surgeon.
- Travel Guidelines
- Travelling is usually possible after spine surgery, but timing depends on the type of surgery performed and your recovery.
- General recommendations include:
- Short Local Travel
- Usually possible after approximately 2 weeks, provided you are comfortable and can get in and out of the vehicle safely.
- Long-Distance Road Travel
- Usually after 6–8 weeks.
- Take frequent breaks every 45–60 minutes to stand, stretch and walk briefly.
- Air Travel
- Short flights may be possible after 4–6 weeks, while longer international travel may require additional time depending on your recovery and the type of surgery.
- Always discuss travel plans with your surgeon before making arrangements.
- Driving
- Driving requires good control of your neck, back and legs, as well as the ability to react quickly in an emergency.
- Most patients may resume driving after:
- 2–4 weeks following minimally invasive procedures.

- 4–6 weeks following fusion surgery.
- You should only drive when:
- Pain is well controlled.
- You are no longer taking strong pain medications.
- You can comfortably perform emergency braking.
- Your surgeon has advised that it is safe to do so.
- Returning To Work
- Returning to work depends on the type of surgery and the physical demands of your occupation.
- General recovery milestones include:
- Activity
- Approximate Timeline
- Walking inside the house
- Immediately after surgery
- Outdoor walking
- After 1 week
- Short local travel
- After 2 weeks
- Work from home
- After 2 weeks
- Office-based work
- 3–4 weeks (for most minimally invasive procedures)
- Light physical work
- 4–8 weeks
- Heavy manual labour
- 3–6 months (depending on the procedure)
- Long-distance travel
- 6–8 weeks
- Sports, gym, running and dancing
- 10–12 weeks or as advised by your surgeon
- These timelines are general guidelines. Your individual recovery may differ depending on the type of surgery and your overall health.
- Physiotherapy & Rehabilitation
- Physiotherapy is an important part of recovery after many spine surgeries.
- Your rehabilitation programme may include:
- Walking exercises
- Stretching exercises
- Core strengthening
- Neck or back mobility exercises

- Balance training
- Posture correction
- Functional training for daily activities
- Your physiotherapist will gradually progress your exercises based on your recovery.
- Avoid starting new exercises without consulting your healthcare team.
- Follow-Up Schedule
- Regular follow-up appointments help ensure that your recovery is progressing well.
- Although the exact schedule may vary, patients are commonly reviewed at:
- 2 weeks – Wound check and early recovery assessment
- 6 weeks – Functional assessment and activity progression
- 3 months – Recovery review and rehabilitation progression
- 6 months – Clinical assessment (with X-rays if required)
- 12 months – Long-term outcome evaluation
- Additional visits may be required depending on the type of surgery or your individual recovery.
- When Should I Contact My Surgeon Immediately?
- Please contact your surgeon without delay if you experience:
- Fever
- Increasing wound redness or discharge
- Severe or worsening pain
- Progressive weakness
- New numbness
- Difficulty walking
- Difficulty passing urine or loss of bladder/bowel control
- Calf swelling or sudden shortness of breath
- Any new symptoms that concern you
- Early recognition and prompt treatment of complications lead to better outcomes.

Frequently Asked Questions

- Can I climb stairs after surgery?
- Yes. Most patients can safely climb stairs with support before leaving the hospital, depending on the type of surgery and their recovery.
- Can I sleep on my side?
- Yes. Most patients can sleep on their back or side, provided they maintain a comfortable and supported position.
- When can I take a bath?
- Once the wound has healed and your surgeon confirms it is safe, you may resume normal bathing. Until then, keep the wound dry as advised.
- Will I need a neck collar or back brace?

- Some patients may require a cervical collar or lumbar brace for a short period after surgery, while others may not. This depends on the type of surgery performed and your surgeon's recommendation.
- Will I need physiotherapy?
- Many patients benefit from physiotherapy, although the timing and duration vary depending on the procedure and individual recovery.
- Key Message

Recovery Is a Journey, Not a Race

- Successful spine surgery is only the first step. A structured rehabilitation programme, regular walking, good nutrition, proper posture and adherence to your surgeon's advice are equally important for achieving the best long-term outcome.
- At Bombay Spine Clinic™, we remain committed to supporting you throughout your recovery—from the day of surgery until you have safely returned to your normal life.
- Need Help During Your Recovery?
- If you have any questions after your surgery or notice any unexpected symptoms, please contact our team promptly.
- We are here to guide you through every stage of your recovery and help you achieve the best possible outcome.
- Bombay Spine Clinic™ Dr. Siddharth Katkade Consultant Spine Surgeon

Need Clinical Evaluation or Second Opinion?

This educational document was prepared by **Dr. Siddharth Katkade**. For appointments or to share MRI scan reports for clinical review, call **+91 88507 73095** or consult at Byculla (E) / Khar (W) clinics.