

OS17lite Lumbar Laminectomy

Expires end of December 2019

A more detailed version of this procedure specific information sheet is available. Please ask your health practitioner at Joondalup Health Campus for a copy.

Write questions or notes here:



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This document will give you information about a lumbar laminectomy. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

What is lumbar spinal stenosis?

Lumbar spinal stenosis is where the spinal canal narrows in your lower back (see figure 1).

A narrowed spinal canal means that there is not enough space for the nerves and blood vessels. You may have difficulty walking and leg pain.

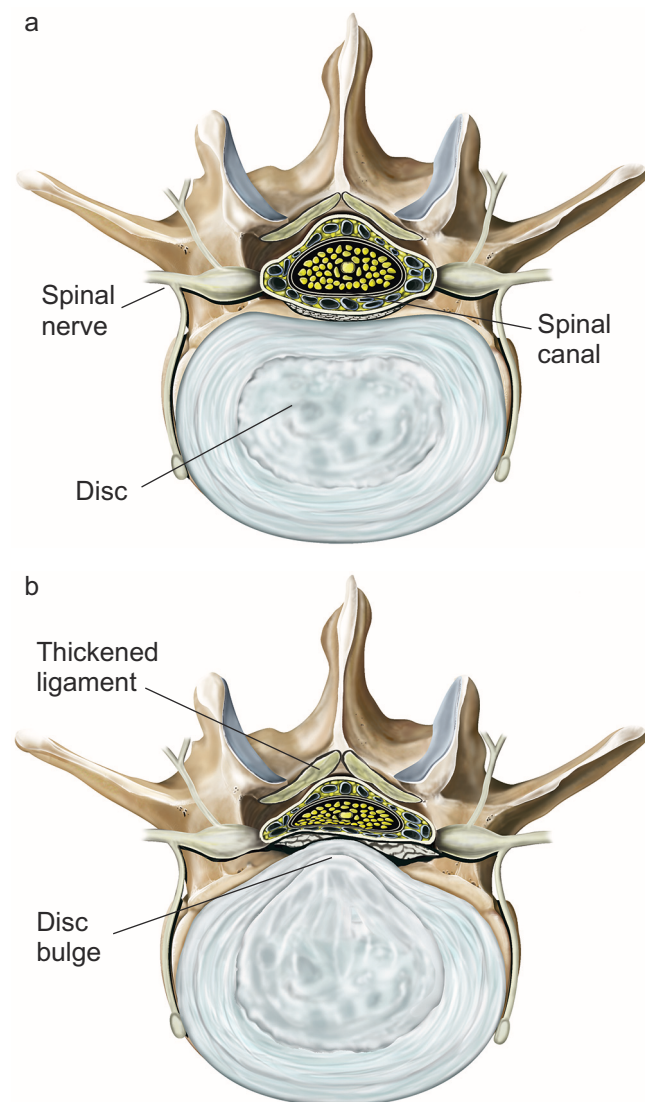


Figure 1

a A normal spinal canal and disc

b A disc bulge pressing the nerves within the spine

What are the benefits of surgery?

The aim is to prevent your symptoms getting worse. You may get less pain and be able to walk further. Some people have a major improvement.

Are there any alternatives to surgery?

If your symptoms are mild, you may not need any treatment. If your symptoms are severe or are getting worse, surgery is usually the only option.

What does the operation involve?

Various anaesthetic techniques are possible. The operation usually takes one to two hours. Your surgeon will make a vertical cut on the centre of your lower back. They will part the muscles to get to your spine. Your surgeon will remove enough bone and ligament tissue to open up the narrowed part of the canal, giving the nerves and blood vessels more room.

What complications can happen?

1 General complications

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Unsightly scarring
- Difficulty passing urine
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Blood clots
- Chest infection
- Heart attack or stroke

2 Specific complications

- Worse pain or numbness down your leg
- Numbness between your legs, loss of normal bowel and bladder control and, for men, problems having an erection
- Neuropathic pain
- Tear of the thin membrane that covers the nerves in your spine
- Infection in your spine
- Spinal instability

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home after two to three days.

Do not lift anything heavy or twist your body.

Make sure you keep a good posture when sitting and walking.

Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.


Most people make a good recovery from surgery. Spinal stenosis can sometimes come back.

Summary

Lumbar spinal stenosis is where the spinal canal narrows in your lower back. This may cause pain or weakness in your legs. The aim of surgery is to prevent your symptoms getting worse.

Acknowledgements

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