

Understanding Laminectomy/ Decompression Surgery

Anatomy

The spine is a complex structure that supports the skeleton and protects the spinal cord. The spinal canal is a tunnel composed of multiple vertebrae stacked on top of each other. Nerve roots branch out from the spinal cord through small openings between individual vertebrae called foramen. Once outside the spinal cord the nerves travel to the various parts of the body.

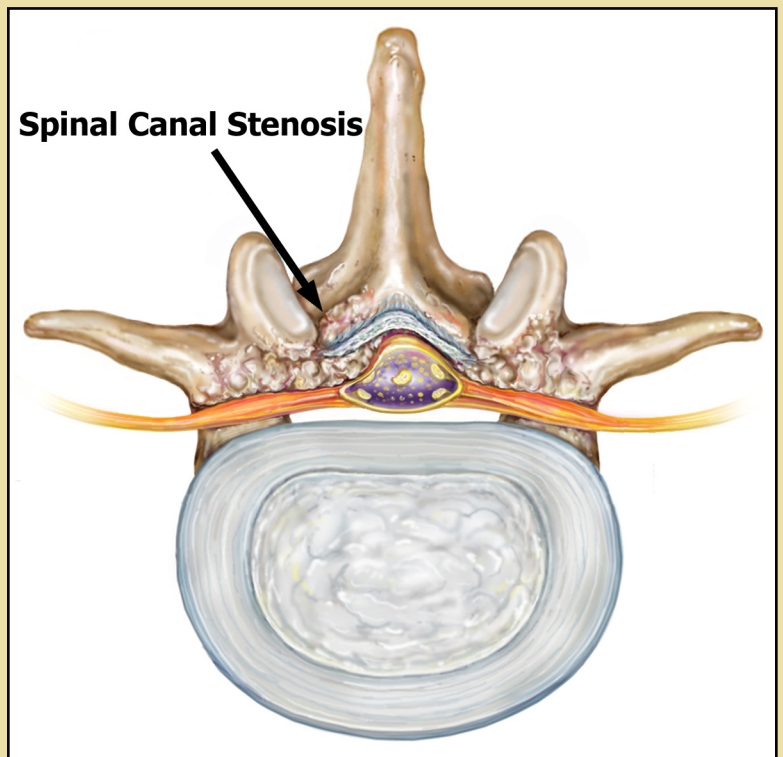
The spinal cord and nerves can become irritated when the integrity of the spinal canal and foramen are compromised. This occurs when a disk bulges posteriorly (towards the back) or when bone spurs develop on the lamina. This results in a significant reduction of space within the spinal canal and the foramen where the nerve exits the spinal canal. When the spinal canal and/or foramen are reduced in size, the residing nerves are more prone to irritation.

Signs and Symptoms

Patients with spinal stenosis may suffer from numbness and tingling, muscle weakness in arms or legs and pain that radiates from the spine into the extremities. Symptoms of spinal nerve irritation are diverse in presentation and severity. This brochure only provides a generalization of the symptoms associated with this disorder.

Treatments

If non-surgical treatments such as NSAID's, physical therapy and epidural steroid injections have failed to relieve your symptoms your doctor may wish to proceed with surgical intervention.



Important Definitions

Foramen: A narrow opening or hole through which nerves and blood vessels pass.

Stenosis: Can be a narrowing of the spinal canal and/or foramen

Neural Impingement: Occurs when nerves are irritated due to pressure from surrounding tissues.

CLINIC LOCATIONS

Columbia Heights
Eagan
Forest Lake
Downtown St. Paul
Hastings
Maplewood
Vadnais Heights
Woodbury - Allina
Woodwinds
Health Campus

CONTACT INFORMATION

Main Line
(651) 842-5200

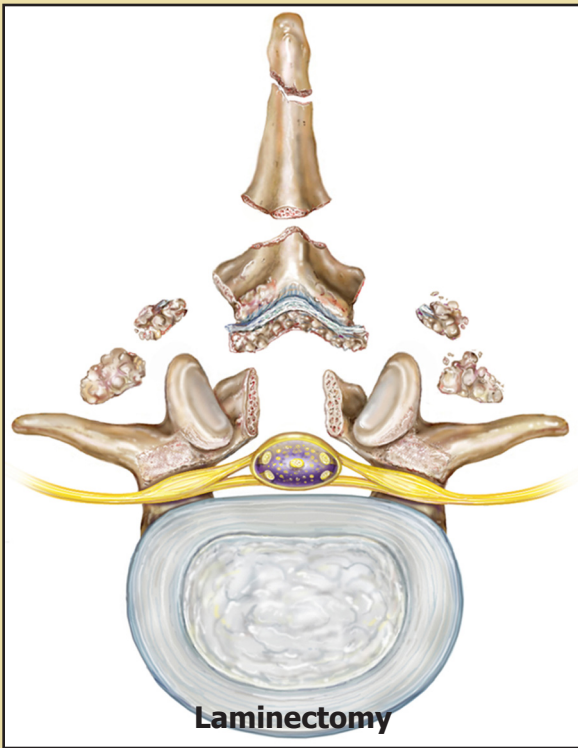
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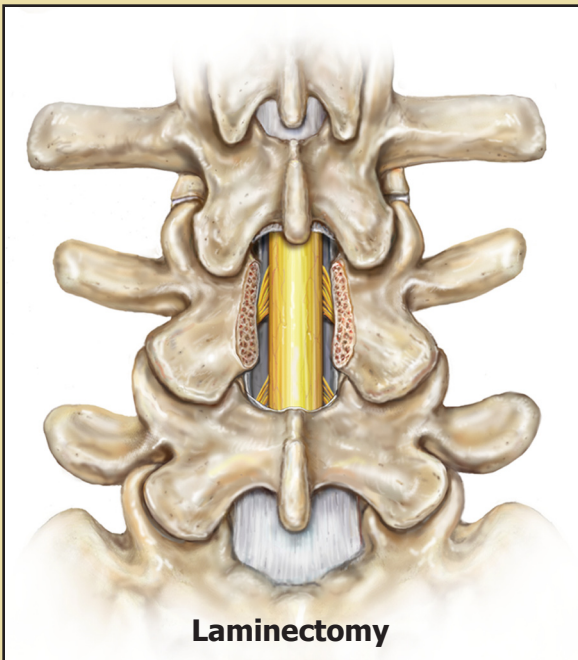


About the Surgery

Your Orthopedic Surgeon will make an incision near the center of your spine between two and six inches long. Through this incision any bone spurs and/or damaged disk material are removed. Once the offending tissues are removed, the incision is closed with sutures. As you heal in the weeks following surgery, the muscles and ligaments of the back will fill in the space where the lamina used to be.

After the Procedure

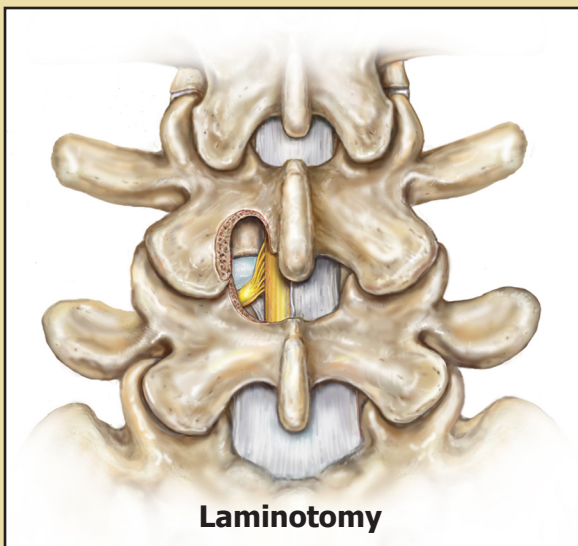
Walking is encouraged after a laminectomy/decompression however, in the six weeks following surgery excessive bending, twisting and lifting will be restricted.



As the surgical date approaches you will be provided more information outlining what to expect before and after surgery.

For additional educational materials regarding this topic please visit our website, www.summitortho.com and click on the "Patient Education" quick link.

NOTES:



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