

Thoracic and Lumbar Spinal Fusion Surgery

Your Surgery

Your health care provider has recommended that you have surgery to fuse one or more vertebrae in your thoracic or lumbar spine. This surgery can help reduce back pain caused by:

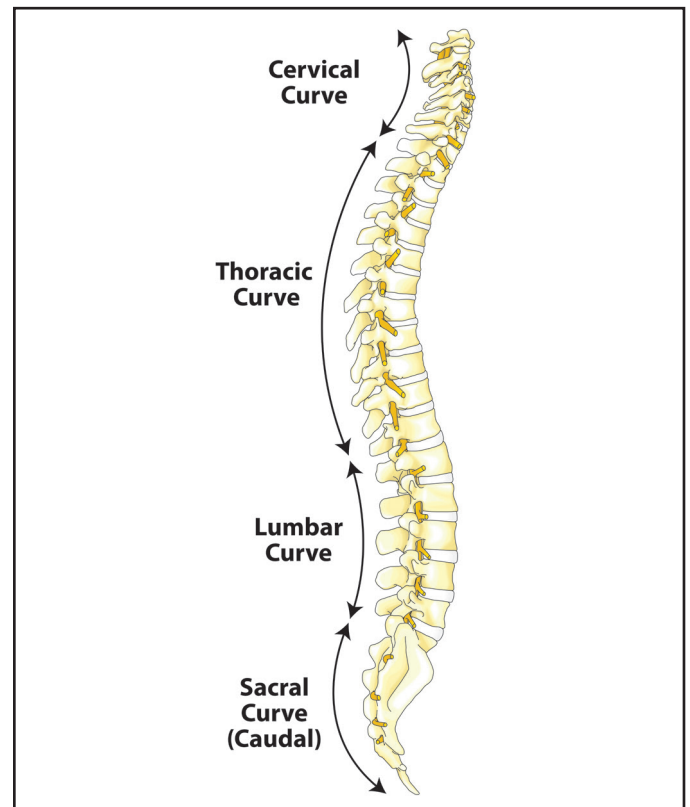
- arthritis
- disc aging
- herniated disc
- deformed bones
- bone-on-bone slippage.

Purpose of Spinal Fusion

Spinal fusion surgery welds, or fuses, one or more of the bones in your spine (vertebrae). This stops movement at the pain point in your spine.

Your surgeon also may place pieces of bone or other material beside or between one or more vertebrae.

Over time, new bone cells will grow and become solid. Normal movement in the other parts of your spine will not change.



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Your health care provider will show you the place or places in your spine that will be fused.

(over)

New Bone Sources

The new bone used during surgery can be your own bone, bone from the American Red Cross or a nationally certified tissue center or both. Together, you and your health care provider will decide the best option for you.

Your own graft bone is usually taken from your pelvis. If removal of bone from your this area causes weakness, bone from a tissue center can be used to build up the weakened area.

What Happens During Surgery

Your surgeon may reach your spine by making an incision on your stomach, back or in both places. If an incision needs to be made on your stomach, a general surgeon will help.

Your surgeon will then place pieces of bone and other materials, such as screws and rods, to stabilize the bones being fused. It can take up to 12 months for your bone to fully fuse.

After Surgery

Until the new bone grows and becomes solid, be careful in your movements. Use proper body mechanics. Your health care provider will tell you when it is safe for you to return to normal activities.

Though rare, screws and rods may loosen or break and cause back and leg pain.

See your “Understanding Your Spine Surgery” book for more information. If you do not have this book, ask a member of your health care team for one.

Whom to Call With Questions

Talk with your health care team if you have any questions or concerns.