

Rehabilitation

What does this mean?

Recovering from spinal surgery is difficult, painful and often slow. But, with the right advice, instruction and guidance, a patient can usually return to normal activities. This may take a few days, or several months depending on the problem and its severity. Rehabilitation is all about getting back to normal.

What is the benefit?

Not only does this process allow the patient to get over the surgery, but it guides them into the right habits, exercise patterns and lifestyle adjustments, which will prevent further problems occurring with their spine.

How is it done?

It is not easy. Medication is needed in the early post-operative phase, to control pain, some times muscle spasms and often to protect against infection or other complications, such as DVT. During a person's rehabilitation, there are physical, psychological and nutritional matters to be considered, as well as managing a return to work, sport or other activities.

Patients leaving the unit are advised both by their surgeon and the in-house physiotherapists about care of the wound, care of their back and some early exercises that they can undertake on their own at home, to start the often slow process of getting their muscles firing again. These should be done carefully; this is a time to go at the pace the body requires, not the [pace set arbitrarily by a therapist. Do not overdo it in the early days, usually meaning the first six to eight weeks.

Some patients need to wear a brace after surgery, so part of their rehabilitation will be the process of weaning off the brace, gradually using it less and less over a set time.

Who supervises this?

The physiotherapy team at the hospital, the therapists at the London Spine Clinic and often other colleagues, such as nutritionists, are involved. The surgeon will oversee the process and check the patient at intervals, but may cede responsibility to one of the therapists once appropriate recovery has taken place.