

## Lumbar Laminectomy

### Who Needs It?

This operation is performed for the condition known as lumbar canal stenosis, when the spine is too narrow for the nerves contained within. Patients typically complain of impaired walking distance and leg pain on exertion. The spinal narrowing is caused by arthritic changes in the joints in the spine which then enlarge. This encroaches on the space available for the nerve roots and leads to the symptoms.

### The Operation

This can be performed under general or epidural anaesthetic. The bone at the back of the spine is removed to enlarge the space available for the nerves. At the same time, if necessary, the foramina, the holes through which the nerves leave the spine, can be enlarged.

### Recovery

This is typically uneventful, most patients leaving hospital within a few days. There are no specific restrictions after surgery, but lifting and bending should be avoided for the first few weeks.

### What are the risks of this operation?

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Cause</b>	<b>% Risk</b> <b>(note figures vary)</b>
Nerve injury	Damage to the nerve whilst removing disc/bone	<1
Fluid leak	Small tear in the nerve sheath allowing leakage of cerebrospinal fluid	<1-5 (But approx 10% if previous surgery)
Infection	Contamination during surgery or, rarely, late infection via the blood	Approx 1
Back pain	Some patients will develop back pain later as a consequence of the weakening effect of this surgery	Up to 10% depending upon fitness
Wound pain	Surgery	All to some extent