

# Dr Warren B. Leigh

MBChB, MMedSci (Distinction)  
Dip Sports Med, FRACS  
Orthopaedic Sports and Spine Surgeon  
[www.orthosports.co.nz](http://www.orthosports.co.nz)



## Post-Operative Spine Management

Recovery after spine surgery involves controlling pain, allowing the muscles to heal and regaining strength in the core muscles and a gradual return to activities. The following instructions are intended as a guide to help you achieve these individual goals and recover as quickly as possible after your arthroscopic shoulder surgery.

### A. COMFORT:

Spine surgery involves a posterior incision. To minimize discomfort, please do the following:

1. **Ice** – Ice controls swelling and discomfort by slowing down the circulation in your shoulder. Place crushed ice in a plastic bag, then wrap the bag with a small towel to protect your skin. Place the ice over your shoulder for no more than 10 minutes, 3 times a day.
2. **Pain Medication** – If your anaesthetist has prescribed a pain medication for you, take it as prescribed, but only as often as necessary. If no pain medication has been prescribed, Paracetamol can be used. **Avoid alcohol if you are taking strong pain medication.**
3. **Positing** – After surgery some people find lying easier and others standing. Initially using chairs with arms allowing you to engage the core muscles before moving is more comfortable. Avoiding lifting weights more than 2kg as well as avoiding bending and twisting until comfort allows.
4. **Motion** – Regular movement often helps. Increasing walking distance as comfort allows will help

### B. ACTIVITIES:

1. **Range-of-Motion** – Avoid bending and twisting for first 4-6 weeks
2. **Daily Activities** –Activities of daily living as your level of comfort permits.  
**Athletic Activities** – Athletic activities, such as swimming, bicycling, jogging, running and stop-and-go sports, should be **avoided** until allowed by your doctor after 6 weeks
3. **Return to Work** – Return to work as soon as you are able. Your ability to work depends on a number of factors – your level of discomfort and how much demand your job puts on your shoulder and arm. If you have any questions, please call your doctor. Typically patients with desk jobs can return at 2-6 weeks.

### C. WOUND CARE:

1. Keep the dressing clean and dry until the first clinic appointment.

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2. Often the waterproof dressings can be left in place until your first post op visit. You will be given spares. If your dressing is soaked with blood or fluid, get a helper to wash their hands, peel the old one off and carefully replace it with a new one.
3. You may shower immediately after surgery providing your waterproof dressings are in place
4. Bathing, swimming and soaking should be avoided until allowed by your doctor after your first follow-up visit.

## **D. EATING:**

Your first few meals, after spine surgery, should include light, easily digestible foods and plenty of liquids, since some people experience slight nausea as a temporary reaction to anesthesia.

## **E. CALL DR LEIGH'S OFFICE IF:**

1. Pain in your back persists or worsens in the first few days after surgery.
2. Excessive redness or drainage of cloudy or bloody material presents itself around the wound
3. You have a temperature elevation greater than 37.5° with no apparent cause.
4. You have pain, swelling or redness or weakness in your leg
5. You notice altered bowel or bladder habit.
6. Any concerns contact Dr Leigh on 021 665045

## **F. RETURN DR LEIGH'S OFFICE AT MILLENNIUM:**

Your first return to our office should be within the first 1-2 weeks after your surgery. The appointment time is included in the pre-operative pack that was posted to you. If you need to change the time, call Shannon (Dr Leigh) on 477 2080 at the Millennium office.