

# Planning for Your Spine Surgery



**UCLA** Santa Monica - UCLA  
Medical Center  
— and —

 **Orthopaedic** Hospital



# About Our Unit

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Welcome to Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center and Orthopaedic Hospital and thank you for putting your trust in us for your spine surgery and rehabilitation. This brochure is designed to explain what you should expect before, during, and after your hospital stay.

Our mission is to ensure you have the best possible patient experience and outcome. We will strive to meet this goal by providing outstanding care and service to help you achieve the highest possible level of functioning.



## Quick Reference Guide

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**Orthopaedic and Spine Unit**  
(310) 319-4800

**Administrative Nurse II**  
(310) 319-1225

**Rehabilitation Services**  
(310) 319-4605

**Case Manager**  
(310) 319-3325

**Patient Affairs**  
(310) 319-4670

# Before Your Surgery

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Please review the checklist below in preparation for your surgery:

- **Medical clearance** – your surgeon may recommend a general medical evaluation by your primary care physician to make sure you are healthy enough for surgery.
- **Tests** – blood samples and other tests, such as EKGs, echocardiograms or urine samples, may be required as part of your routine pre-operative evaluation.
- **Education** – visit our website, [www.uclahealth.org/orthospineinfo](http://www.uclahealth.org/orthospineinfo), for detailed information about your hospital stay.
- **Medications** – make a list of your medications and bring it with you to our hospital. Please do NOT bring your medications. Our Pharmacy will provide your medications. If you have questions or concerns about drug availability, consult with your physician.

## About Your Care

- **Braces** – your surgeon may recommend that you be fitted for a neck or back brace, if appropriate.
- **Length of stay** – plan to be in the hospital from 1 to 4 days, depending on the type of surgery you are having.
- **Discharge planning** – our goal is for you to return home directly from the hospital, but placement in a skilled nursing facility may be arranged, if necessary. You may want to arrange for help at home with activities of daily living, including bathing, dressing, cooking and shopping, while you are recuperating.
- **Complications** – as with any surgery, there is a possibility of complications, such as blood clots, infection and lung congestion. Be sure to review these risks with your physician prior to surgery.

# Day of Surgery

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- You will check in through our Admissions Department and then be directed to our Procedure and Treatment Unit (PTU) to be prepped for surgery. One family member may accompany you to the PTU, where you will meet your pre-operative nurse and anesthesiologist.
- Once your surgery is completed (usually 1-4 hours), you will be awakened gradually in our Post-Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU). This process takes approximately 2 hours. No family members are allowed in this room. Your surgeon will brief your family while you are in our PACU.
- Once you are awake, your vital signs are stable and your pain is well controlled, you will be transported to your hospital room. Our staff will then focus on helping you with pain control, nausea management, starting a liquid diet and getting restful sleep.



# Our Care Team

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During your hospital stay, you will meet many members of our health care team who work together to provide you with excellent care.

These include:

- **Registered Nurse** – will be assessing your overall condition, answering questions, communicating with your doctors and giving you medications.
- **Care Partner** – is responsible for taking care of your basic needs, including taking vital signs and assisting with personal hygiene and toileting.



- **Resident Doctors** – your surgeon works with a team of resident doctors who will visit you daily and can be reached on a 24-hour basis.
- **Unit Secretary** – this person is based at the nurse’s station and will speak with you when you use the call light.
- **Physical Therapist** – if indicated, you will be visited by a physical therapist (PT) who will evaluate how well you can move in bed and walk.
- **Occupational Therapist** – you may also be visited by an occupational therapist (OT) to evaluate how well you can complete activities of daily living, including dressing, bathing and toileting.
- **Phlebotomist** – will take blood samples each morning as directed by your physician.
- **Case Manager** – will assist in planning for your discharge to home or a rehab facility.
- **Durable Medical Equipment Vendor** – will coordinate ordering and delivery of any equipment you may need at home, including walkers, crutches, bedside commodes and sock aids.

### After Surgery – Day 1

Generally, there will be activity/mobility precautions you will need to follow to protect the surgical area while it is healing. These will be reviewed with you by one of our team members.

- **PT Evaluation** – In most cases, you will be evaluated by a physical therapist to determine your ability to get out of bed and walk, as tolerated. You will also be instructed in basic exercises and, if applicable, your PT will assist you in properly putting on and taking off your neck or back brace.



- **OT Evaluation** – you also may be evaluated by an occupational therapist to assess your ability to care for yourself. He or she will instruct you in the use of adaptive equipment — reacher, sock aid — as needed.
- Our nursing staff will continue to make sure your needs are met and your pain is well controlled.
- You will resume a normal diet, as tolerated.

### **After Surgery – Day 2:**

- Begin transition to oral pain medication.
- Resume normal toileting habits.
- Get up for all meals and walk to the bathroom, as needed.

- Our PT staff will continue working with you on mobility and preparing you for discharge, including techniques for getting out of bed, improved walking tolerance and curb/stair training. You will be seen by our PT staff daily while you are hospitalized or until you meet your physical therapy goals.

### After Surgery – Day 3 and Beyond:

- Continue plans of care as described above.
- Improve mobility
- Finalize discharge plans

Talk with your surgeon about the timeline for returning to a higher level of daily activities, including working, driving and more vigorous exercise.

You will leave our hospital with all the information you need to ensure a smooth transition to home or a rehab facility. Our goal is to help you resume a normal, active lifestyle.

**UCLA Comprehensive Spine Center**

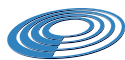
(310) 319-3475

[www.spinecenter.ucla.edu](http://www.spinecenter.ucla.edu)

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