

# Welcome

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome	1
Your Care Team Members	3
Making Your Stay More Comfortable	4
What to Expect	5
Take Care	6
Spine Surgical Procedures	8
Going Home	9
Here for You	10
Frequently Asked Questions	11
Countdown to Surgery	12-13
Directions to Mercy San Juan Medical Center	14

The Mercy San Juan Medical Center team has designed a comprehensive program to guide and assist you through your surgery and hospital stay so you may have a speedy recovery and return home as quickly as possible. Members of our team will work with you in areas such as self-care, exercise, mobility and pain management. We want to assist in your preparation for this surgery experience. Each patient's treatment and recovery plan will be tailored to meet his or her individual needs.

### Watch the enclosed DVD

All of us at Mercy San Juan want your surgery procedure and recovery to be as successful and comfortable as possible. You can help make the process go smoother and ease many concerns you may have by watching the enclosed DVD. The objective of the DVD is to help prepare you for surgery and answer some questions you may have about the procedure and the recovery process. Patients who have watched the DVD report that the information presented is very helpful in preparing them for what to expect during their hospital stay.

You are encouraged to call the Spine Program Coordinator if you have any further questions about your hospital stay at, 916-537-5177.



Dear Surgery Patient,

On behalf of the surgeons, nurses, and our ancillary and support staff, I am very pleased to welcome you to Mercy San Juan Medical Center, a member of Dignity Health. You and your surgeon have selected our hospital for your surgery and we will do all that we can to make your experience comfortable and your recovery as successful as possible. We are committed to doing all that we can to prepare you in advance for your procedure, to meet all of your needs while you are a patient with us and to plan with you a smooth transition home. Our mission is to provide the most advanced, evidence-based medical care in a manner that treats all patients and guests with respect and dignity.

You have received this letter in a pre-surgery patient information packet with very important information that will help prepare you for your surgery. Please read the enclosed packet of materials carefully. It includes all of the things you need to know to prepare yourself for surgery, including such things as a schedule for our pre-surgery education classes that cover all aspects of the surgery experience, to providing you with a "surgery check list" to use during the 24 hours before you arrive. In partnership with your doctor, our pre-surgery class is designed to help you get ready for surgery and to answer any questions you may have from "Visiting Hours" to "Pain Management". Please take the time to thoroughly read these materials. The phone number for the pre-admission nurse is also included, if you have questions that are not answered during class or answered in the written materials.

We look forward to working with you and assisting you before, during and after your surgery. Patients who are well-prepared and who know what to expect are more active participants in their recovery. The enclosed pre-surgery education materials and instructions are the first step you can take towards a smooth and successful recovery following your surgery.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Wood".

Christopher L. Wood, FACHE  
Senior Director

Mercy Neurological Institute  
6501 Coyle Avenue  
Carmichael, CA 95608  
dignityhealth.org

# Your Care Team Members

**Physician**—Your decision to have surgery has been made by you and your surgeon, who will be providing your surgery care. There will be a continuous flow of information between your doctor and other team members to coordinate your care. During your hospital stay, your doctor will see you daily. If you have a question, you will have the opportunity to ask your doctor directly.

**Anesthesiologist**—Your anesthesiologist will meet with you prior to surgery. The anesthesiologist will talk to you about your medical history and help you to understand how anesthesia may affect you. It is important for you to ask any questions you may have about anesthesia during this visit.

**Nurse**—From admission until discharge, all of your care will be planned and supervised by a Mercy San Juan registered nurse. Your nurse will oversee treatment to help manage your pain, hygienic needs and comfort. You may require frequent assistance immediately following your surgery, but by the time you are discharged, you will be more independent.

**Physical Therapist**—Your Mercy San Juan physical therapist will help you regain strength and mobility, enabling you to get in and out of bed, stand up and walk. Your therapist will teach you to move in ways that are safe and effective. You will practice new techniques for movement to protect your spine and help with recovery. Physical therapy may begin within a day or two after your surgery.

**Occupational Therapist**—A Mercy San Juan occupational therapist provides instruction to help you perform daily living tasks safely. You may be shown new equipment or methods for dressing, bathing and getting in and out of a car to protect your spine.

**Case Manager**—A Mercy San Juan registered nurse case manager will help you and your family determine the type of assistance you will need at home. The case manager will help coordinate any equipment needs and provide information on levels of care and community resources available to you.

**Pharmacist**—Mercy San Juan pharmacists provide 24-hour services, including preparation of individually-packaged medications prescribed by your doctor. Your pharmacist will also monitor your medications for dosages, side effects, allergic reactions and interactions with other drugs.

**Chaplain**—Mercy San Juan specially-trained chaplains minister to the spiritual and emotional needs of patients and their families, regardless of their religious affiliation. You can arrange a visit with a chaplain by asking your nurse.

**Social Worker**—Mercy San Juan social workers specialize in the assessment and treatment of psychosocial issues, and may be a part of your treatment team to provide support, counseling, education and resources.

**Dietitian**—A Mercy San Juan dietitian will assist you to make sure your nutritional needs are met and, at your doctor's request, may consult with you about your diet.

**Respiratory Care Practitioner**—At the request of your doctor, a Mercy San Juan respiratory care practitioner may work with you on breathing treatments and exercises.

# Making Your Stay More Comfortable

## Guest Services

We want your experience at Mercy San Juan to meet all of your expectations. We want you to be very satisfied with the care and service you receive at Mercy San Juan. During your hospital stay with us, please tell us if your care is not meeting your needs and expectations. We want to do whatever we can to ensure your comfort. Each room at Mercy San Juan is equipped with cable TV. If you find yourself in need of items such as slippers, just ask your nurse. The hospital provides Wi-Fi connectivity to the Internet for patients and their guests so that you can stay connected during your hospital stay. Call the hospital operator, by dialing “0” on your phone, for the access code and instructions to connect your device to the “Guest – MSJ” network.

## Condition Help

At Mercy San Juan, our highest priority is your safety and comfort. As part of this commitment, we have developed **Condition Help**, a service to provide patients and their loved ones with additional help if they feel urgent attention is needed, or in the case of an emergency.

**Condition Help** provides patients and their family members a resource for immediate help if they feel they need extra attention right away, if something just doesn’t “feel right,” or if they feel their concerns are not being adequately addressed.

To access **Condition Help**, simply call “0” from the bedside telephone. Explain your concern to the operator and help will be summoned. We want to make every effort to address your concerns as well as eliminate any system problems that can affect the delivery of exceptional care.

# What to Expect

## Anesthesia

During your surgery, you will be under general anesthesia and unconscious the entire time. Anesthesia is usually started with an injection of medication into a vein. Medication is given throughout the surgery, either through the vein or by inhalation of anesthetic gases. Pain and anti-nausea medications are also given during this time.

## Medications

**Pain Control**—We will assess your pain rating when you are first admitted to the hospital and then again each time we take your vital signs during your stay. Our goal is to have your pain controlled as much as possible. Not only will you be more comfortable, but optimal pain control is important to speed your recovery and ensure participation in necessary therapies.

Generally, medication is scheduled and given at regular intervals immediately after surgery. Oral and injected medications work best to control pain when they are given at set times, rather than waiting until the pain returns.

Don’t wait until the pain is unbearable to alert your nurse. It is more difficult to stop or control pain once it has started. This step is important in proper pain control. Take pain medication prior to getting out of bed, walking or doing breathing exercises if these activities make your pain worse.

After your surgery, you will be transitioned from intravenous pain medication to oral pain medication.

Non-medication pain control methods can be effective at supplementing the pain relief effect of medications. These methods include: hot or cold packs, positioning, relaxation and/or prayer/meditation. Music, guided imagery and other pastimes that help distract you are also beneficial.

**Antibiotics**—You will be given antibiotics before surgery and for 24 hours after surgery. Because of the nature of some spine surgeries which include instrumentation, there may be a need to take antibiotics in the future if you undergo certain surgical procedures. Talk to your doctor for details.

Be sure to inform your nurse and surgeon of all the medication you regularly take including non-prescription drugs.

# Take Care

## Nutrition and Diet

While it is always important to eat a healthy, well-balanced diet, it is particularly important both before and after surgery. Your nutritional status will affect the way you recover. This is not the time to go on a weight-loss diet. Healthy food choices include plenty of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean meats and low-fat dairy products.

You should notify your doctor if you have experienced any of the following: involuntary weight loss, poor appetite, problems with chewing or swallowing, recent illness or infection, food allergies or intolerance, diarrhea or excessive alcohol consumption.

Following your surgery, you will not be given anything to eat until you are fully awake. As you recover from your surgery, the amount and type of food you receive will progress, starting with clear liquids.

When you return home, it will be important for you to continue healthy eating habits. Remember that good nutrition plays a vital role in your recovery, helping your body to heal, rebuild muscles and regain your strength.

## Recovery After Surgery

As you progress through your recovery, you will learn movement techniques and exercises recommended for your particular type of surgery. Your therapists will develop a care plan specifically designed for you and will provide you with appropriate information on precautions, equipment needs and exercise. Your care instructions are to be followed diligently until your doctor gives you clearance to discontinue them.

In order to prevent complications while in bed in the hospital or at home, you should:

- Move side to side every two hours
- Take several deep breaths and cough every hour while you are awake
- Bend your knees and ankles up and down four or five times every two hours

## General Precautions at Home

Before you come to the hospital, you should reduce tripping hazards in your home by taking the following precautions:

- Remove all throw rugs
- Secure all carpet to the floor
- Remove all electrical cords from pathways
- Arrange furniture to allow a minimum of 3 feet of clearance around it
- Keep pet's and children's toys off the floor

# Spine Surgical Procedures

## Surgical Procedures

**Microsurgical Discectomy**—A one-and-a-half or two-inch incision is used to gain entrance to the spine during this procedure. An operating microscope and special instruments are used to remove ruptured disk fragments. This procedure minimizes trauma to the tissue and decreases the amount of pain experienced after surgery. Commonly, the patient can be discharged one to two days after surgery.

**Conventional Laminectomy**—This procedure is more extensive than microsurgical removal of the disk. It entails a larger incision and a greater amount of bone removal. The hospital stay is one to three days after surgery.

**Decompressive Laminectomy**—This procedure is used for arthritic patients whose disease has narrowed the spaces around the nerves that travel to the legs. This condition is called spinal stenosis and usually requires an extensive removal of bone from behind the nerves. The usual hospitalization is two to four days after surgery.

**Spinal Fusion**—This procedure is performed on patients whose x-rays have shown abnormal movement of the spine. The movement may be the result of a birth defect, trauma or prior surgery. Bone may be taken from the hip or a cadaver bone graft may be used. Your surgeon will discuss your bone graft options with you. The bone is placed in the back, or metal rods and wires may be used to strengthen the spine. Hospitalization following surgery varies in time, depending on the extent of the surgery. A special brace may also be necessary for several months following the surgery.

**Fluoroscopic/Endoscopic Microdiscectomy**—A one- or two-inch incision is made to allow a working tube to be inserted in the spine to take out the disk. Patients are under sedation instead of a general anesthetic for the procedure. The patient may leave the hospital one to two hours after surgery.

**Kyphoplasty**—A hollow instrument is inserted into the vertebra and a type of X-ray called fluoroscopy is used to guide it into position. Once it is in place, an inflatable balloon-like device is inserted. As the balloon is inflated, a type of bone cement fills the space around the vertebra. This procedure is performed using a general anesthetic.

## Recovery After Spine Surgery

Your therapists will develop a care plan specifically designed for you and will provide you with appropriate information on precautions, equipment needs and exercise. Your care instructions are to be followed diligently until your doctor gives you clearance to discontinue them.

Depending on the type of surgery you have, your doctor may prescribe a neck collar, back brace, corset or other type of equipment. Your nurse and therapists will explain how to use these devices.

## General Precautions at Home for Spine Patients

For all types of spine surgery, remember: “No BLT.” This means no Bending, no Lifting and no Twisting at the waist. When getting in and out of bed, you will be taught a “log roll” technique.

# Going Home

## General Precautions continued

Call your doctor if you have any signs of infection, including fever or wound problems such as redness, heat or drainage. Notify your doctor immediately if your temperature reaches 101° F.

Remember these important guidelines:

- Do not do housework—including making the bed.
- Do not sit for more than 15 to 20 minutes at a time.
- Do not shower until cleared by your doctor.
- Do not drive or ride in a car until cleared by your doctor. (You may ride in a car to go home from the hospital and to return for your first follow-up visit with your doctor.)
- Do not have sexual intercourse until cleared by your doctor.
- Do not start any exercise program until cleared by your doctor.
- DO begin taking short walks and increase a little each day as fatigue and pain permit.

## Household Activities

- Arrange your environment so everyday functional objects are handy. Don't put items too high or too low.
- Use a reaching tool to get items off the floor to avoid bending.
- Change positions frequently as directed by your doctor when doing time-consuming activities; do not sit or stand for too long at one time.
- When sitting, use a firm, comfortable chair with arm rests. Do not sit on low or very soft chairs.
- Use a toilet commode or other equipment recommended by your therapist and doctor.

## Sleeping

- A firm mattress is best. Elevate your bed slightly if possible.
- A pillow between your knees may keep your back more comfortable when sleeping on your side.
- Remember to “log roll” when turning or getting out of bed. Do not twist or bend.
- Before getting out of bed, pump your ankles and bend your knees up and down about 10 times. This will help prevent swelling and pooling of blood in your legs.

## Walking

- If you use a walker when you return home, stand straight, look up and keep your bottom tucked under you.
- Keep your hips aligned when using the walker, with your toes pointed forward.
- Do not twist your body to turn. Move your feet and body together as you turn gradually.
- Do not take a step until the walker is flat on the floor. Do not tip it onto the back legs.
- Increase your walking a little each day as fatigue and pain permit.

## Stairs

- Use a handrail or rails when available. Take one step at a time.
- If you have one leg that is stronger than the other, go up with the stronger leg first, and go down with the weaker leg first. This way the stronger leg will always be the more supportive limb as you climb or descend.

# Here for you

## Common Postoperative Concerns

You may be sent home with a prescription for pain medication. These medications are to be used as directed by your doctor. Sometimes, side effects such as fatigue, dry mouth and constipation may occur. Your need for pain relief will subside over time. If it persists, please contact your doctor.

## Constipation

Anesthesia, decreased physical activity, dehydration, narcotic usage and a change in eating habits all increase the likelihood of constipation in spine surgery patients. Drinking extra fluids, increasing fiber in your diet, using a bulk laxative such as Metamucil or Citrucel, or taking a stool softener such as docusate sodium (available over the counter) may help.

## Incision

Depending on the type of spine surgery you have, you may have one or more incisions. Incisions will be closed with staples, sutures, skin glue or paper tape. Some sutures are self-dissolving and do not require removal. Staples or removable sutures are removed at your first postoperative appointment, about 10 to 12 days after surgery. Paper tape will fall off slowly or be removed in the doctor's office. Follow your surgeon's instructions carefully, and call if you have questions.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## How Can I Avoid Infection?

1. Antibiotics will most likely be ordered for your procedure. Antibiotics may be given before and after your surgery. Given properly, antibiotics can greatly lower your chances of getting an infection after surgery.
2. Hair removal will be performed using clippers. Do not shave your surgery site. Using a razor often leaves small cuts in the skin which can lead to infection. Instead, our preoperative staff will use electric clippers to remove hair from your surgery site, if necessary.
3. Hand washing by your entire team, including family members and visitors, is a must. All health team members wash their hands frequently and the surgical team follows sterile techniques for all procedures.

## How Can I Avoid a Blood Clot?

Patients undergoing surgery can be at risk for blood clots due to loss of mobility or anesthetic effects. The more complicated your surgery, the greater the risk. Based on your procedure and your medical history, your surgeon will evaluate any steps needed to avoid blood clots, such as special medicines or garments to apply to your legs to promote proper blood circulation.

## What About my Heart Problems?

Your surgeon will tell you which medicines you should continue to take and which medicines you should stop taking before surgery. We will also discuss your medicines with you prior to surgery. Make sure to report all medicines you are taking, including over-the-counter and herbal remedies.

## How do I Know They are Doing the Right Surgery?

For your safety, multiple members of the health team will ask you for your full name, date of birth and the site of your surgery to help verify the details of your procedure. The operative team will review the procedure with you, and your surgical site will be marked by the surgeon to further ensure accuracy.

# Countdown to Surgery

An informed patient is often more relaxed after surgery and is likely to recover more rapidly and in greater comfort. This countdown will help you prepare for your procedure and understand what to expect. Please review the remainder of this packet for further information. For details specific to your surgery, contact your surgeon.

## Pre-Procedure Testing

Lab	Date/Time: _____	Location: _____
EKG	Date/Time: _____	Location: _____
Imaging	Date/Time: _____	Location: _____
Other	Date/Time: _____	Location: _____

## One Week or More Before

- Watch the enclosed DVD. Call 916-537-5177 if you have any questions.
- Check with your surgeon about medications to stop or continue taking—especially blood thinners.
- Register for pre-admission.

## Three to Five Days or More Before

- Complete all pre-operative tests ordered by your surgeon.
- Read pre-surgery instructions in this packet.

## One to Two Days Before

- Expect a phone call from pre-admitting nurse. Be prepared to discuss your surgical/health history and medications, including dosages.
- Arrange for your transport to/from the hospital.

## Day of Surgery

- Do not consume food or drink except sips of water with approved medication (for afternoon surgeries, check with your surgeon).
- Arrive at least two hours prior to your surgery to the location provided by the pre-admission nurse or surgeon's office.

## For More Information

Should you have questions, call:

- Main operating room pre-admission nurse: 916.537.5064
- Spine Program Coordinator: 916.537.5177

# Countdown to Surgery

## Pre-Surgery Instructions

By carefully following these instructions, you can avoid unnecessary delays or cancellations for your surgery:

- Nothing by mouth after midnight on the night prior to your surgery (including gum, candy or chewing tobacco). A sip of water with approved medications is allowed. Diabetics and patients with afternoon surgeries will receive special instructions.
- Medications: We will review your medications with you and give you instructions during your pre-op phone call. If you use products containing aspirin or any blood thinners, it is important that you ask your surgeon about stopping or continuing those medications. On the day of your procedure, please note the day and time when you last took each of your medications and bring your complete personal medication list.
- It is very important that you make arrangements for transportation to and from the hospital before your surgery. Please note that your discharge time may be early in the morning (before 11 a.m.) and that whomever is picking you up should be at the hospital at that time. You may NOT take a taxi or bus unless you have an adult family member or friend to accompany you. After receiving an anesthetic, you will NOT be permitted to drive, as the effects of the medicine are similar to legal intoxication. Outpatients must have a responsible adult to care for them for 24 hours after surgery.
- Illness: If you develop a fever, cold or flu symptoms, notify your surgeon immediately.
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing.
- Arrive two hours prior to surgery.
- Leave all jewelry and valuables at home.
- Do not wear makeup. Use the patient preoperative skin prep wipes included in this packet.
- Bring your insurance card, photo ID, co-pay and durable power of attorney documents (if applicable).
- Bring any other equipment as advised by your surgeon (e.g., cervical collar, back brace, CPAP machine).

## Contact Numbers

- Patient Registration: 916.536.3270
- Pre-admission Department: 916.537.5064
- Outpatient surgery pre-admission nurse: 916.864.5586
- Financial/Billing department: 916.852.4040
- Mercy General Rehabilitation Services: 916.453.4553
- Spine Program Coordinator: 916.537.5177
- Mercy San Juan Medical Center: 916.537.5000

# Directions to Mercy San Juan Medical Center



**From North Sacramento/Citrus Heights Areas**—Take Sunrise Blvd. going south. Turn right onto Madison Ave. Turn right onto Dewey Drive. Turn left onto Coyle Ave. 6501 Coyle Ave. is on the right .

**From South Sacramento areas**—Start out going north on CA-99N toward Sacramento. Take Capital City Fwy/I-80-BR E becomes I-80 E. Take the Madison Ave. exit 96. Turn right onto Madison Ave. Turn left on Millburn St. Turn right onto Coyle Ave. 6501 Coyle Ave. is on the left.

**From Orangevale/Rancho Cordova Areas**—Start going west on Greenback Lane. Turn left onto Dewey Drive. Turn right onto Coyle Ave. 6501 Coyle Ave. is on the right.

**From West Sacramento**—Take I-80 E toward Reno. Take Madison Ave. Exit 96. Turn right onto Madison Ave. Turn left on Millburn St. Turn right onto Coyle Ave. 6501 Coyle Ave. is on the left.

## Parking

Handicapped parking space are available at Mercy San Juan. The Shuttle Service is available Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., except major holidays.

