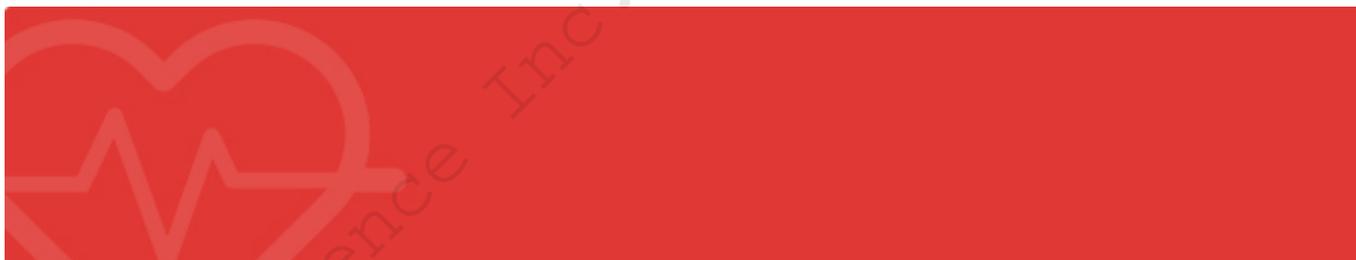


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## Lifestyle choices for smooth recovery after spinal fusion

[Spinal fusion](#) is a major spine surgery in which the surgeons fuse two or more vertebrae. The intention is to form a single, long bone that remains in place and does not move like vertebrae do. As a result, the patient no longer feels the pain in the back due to nerve compression resulting out of disc herniation or some other reason. However, it is also important to talk about what happens post surgery, how long will it take for the pain to completely nullify, and basically knowing everything for a smooth recovery after spinal fusion.

The main aim of the surgery is to stabilize the spine after the removal of herniated or diseased disc material. Spinal fusion helps treat a variety of spine conditions such as scoliosis, degenerative disc disease, fractures, spinal tumors, and spinal stenosis. Screws and plates help joint multiple vertebrae together, which then heal over a period of time to form a single piece of solid bone.



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The healing of the bone after fusion takes a long time. However, how successful the surgery is and how well the bone heals largely depends on how well the patient has followed the instructions of the surgeon.

The surgeon gives specific instructions to the patient at the time of discharge. As with any other surgery, the patient has to make several adjustments in his daily routine to ensure positive outcomes. There are several sacrifices that one has to make irrespective of how healthy they are at the time of discharge or before the surgery.

It is important to stay aware of the factors that can hamper your recovery after spine surgery. This article explores some of the lifestyle choices that one has to make after spinal fusion. Additionally, it examines how making bad choices can severely affect the outcomes of the spinal fusion surgery.

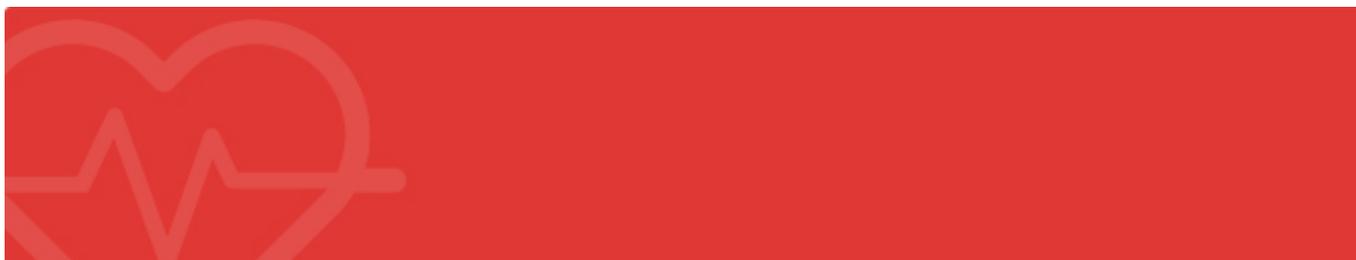
### Five Lifestyle Choices That Can Expedite Recovery





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Just like smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, too, has an effect on post-surgical complications and recovery. During the surgery, alcohol can interfere with an assessment of the amount of anesthesia required for the patient. This is because alcohol relaxes the muscles and also induces depression. This can make the situation difficult for the anesthesiologist if the patient has had consumed alcohol prior to the surgery.



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If the patient continues to drink alcohol after the surgery, the chemicals in it can interfere with the narcotics medications given after the surgery. This can, in turn, reduce the effectiveness of the medications while increasing its sedative effects.

**Lose Weight Before Surgery**



Excessive weight on the back can put extra pressure on the back and the muscles surrounding the spine. This can complicate a few surgical procedures and the outcomes out of the surgery. Therefore, overweight individuals must shed a few kilograms before the surgery for better surgical outcomes.

This is especially important for people with body fat percentage greater than 25. Such individuals are at an increased risk of poor surgical outcomes and complications after the surgery. Such individuals can reduce their weight-related risk factors by losing just 15 percent of their excess weight.

### **Avoid Taking Supplements**



A majority of people take vitamins and supplements every day on top of their daily diet for nutritional support. However, spinal fusion candidates are required to stop taking these supplements at least a week before the surgery. This is because these supplements may interfere with working of the medications that are given just after the surgery. Additionally, these may also interfere with the anesthesia that is given during the procedure.

Some supplements containing *ginkgo biloba*, vitamin E, ginger, and garlic may actually act as a blood-thinner. Therefore, these increase the risk of excessive bleeding during the surgery. This is also true about some over-the-counter medications as well, including aspirin. The patient must stop all such medications and supplements before the surgery for better outcomes and to reduce the risk of complications.

## **Movement and Physical Therapy**



A therapist assisting a patient during

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physiotherapy

Surgeons urge the patients to undergo physical therapy for improved movement and mobility after the surgery. In fact, the doctors encourage the spinal fusion patients to start walking before discharge. This is done to reduce the risks associated with non-mobility such as the formation of blood clots.

Physical therapy plays a key role in recovery after spinal fusion. A physiotherapist is slow at first but gradually helps you build your stamina by performing exercises and increasing mobility. Listen to what your physiotherapist tells you and gradually increase your activity level to head towards successful recovery.

In fact, the patient should start exercising before the surgery to build core strength. This helps speed up the recovery process and also reduced the risk of complications



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