

Lumbar Arthroplasty

University Neurosurgery Information Sheet

General Indications for the Procedure:

This procedure is used to treat single or multiple levels of symptomatic degenerative disc disease.

Description of the Procedure:

The abdomen is opened and the front part of the lumbar spine exposed. The proper level(s) are verified with an x-ray. Large vessels carrying blood to and from the legs are mobilized to provide safe access to the disc space. The disc at each symptomatic level is removed and an artificial disc replacement is inserted into the space previously occupied by the disc. The wound is closed.

Risks of Procedure:

The risks and possible complications of this procedure are quite rare. They include, but are not limited to infection, bleeding, and injury to the nerves, which could result in permanent paralysis and/or numbness in the leg. The blood vessels in front of the spine could be injured which may require additional surgery or could result in significant problems due to poor blood flow into or out of the legs. There is a remote risk of injury to the abdominal contents including the bowel and ureters. Retrograde ejaculation may develop in men which would significantly impact their ability to have children. There is a slight chance the artificial disc may slip out leading to the need for further surgery. There is no guarantee that this operation will alleviate the symptoms.

Procedure Alternatives, if any:

An interbody fusion performed either through an anterior, posterior, or lateral route may also be effective. A posterior lateral fusion may be indicated in selected patients. The surgeon can describe the advantages and disadvantages of each of these if the patient desires.

Probable Consequences of Refusing the Procedure:

Symptoms will persist and/or worsen.

Person(s) Performing the Procedure:

The surgical team for this procedure is large. This involves, but is not limited to, the attending surgeons, resident surgeons, surgical nurses, physician assistants, surgical technologists and anesthesiologists. Everyone involved will be performing important tasks related to the surgery in accordance with the hospital policies, and based on their skill set and under the supervision of the responsible practitioners.