

# Lumbar Laminectomy

## *University Neurosurgery Information Sheet*

### **General Indications for the Procedure:**

A lumbar laminectomy is a procedure used to relieve pressure from the nerves in the lower back and increase the size of the spinal canal by removing some of the bones and ligaments of the spine.

### **Description of the Procedure:**

A lumbar laminectomy is performed by making a one or more incision(s) in the lower back. The muscles are carefully moved and the area where the nerves are compressed is exposed. Intraoperative x-ray is used to localize the proper level. The bone and ligaments which are compressing the nerves are removed. The bleeding is controlled and 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 nerve root which could result in permanent paralysis and/or numbness in the leg. There is a slight chance that spinal fluid may leak from the tissue surrounding the spinal cord. If this occurs the leak can usually be successfully stopped with stitches. Infrequently such leakage may require additional surgery to control. The removal of bone and ligament may rarely result in spinal instability which would require a fusion to be performed with a second surgery. There is no guarantee that this operation will alleviate the symptoms.

### **Procedure Alternatives, if any:**

Steroid injections may provide short term benefit. In select cases spinal decompression may be achieved with the placement of a distraction device between the spinous processes. The surgeon can address any questions concerning this procedure. Continued nonoperative management is also an alternative to undergoing a procedure.

### **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.