



# General Guide to Spinal Fusions

## Introduction

This pamphlet provides you with a guide to the following:

- Equipment
- Procedures
- People you will meet and their role

We are all different and everyone's recovery from surgery varies greatly. Thus this pamphlet should be received as a guide and not taken as concrete advice. The nurses on the sixth floor Paediatric Ward believe that it is important to provide this information so that you can participate in your care, raise questions and make decisions.

## Before Your Operation

You will have seen your Consultant who will have explained to you in detail what your surgery will entail and arranged for several investigations prior to your surgery such as:

X-ray / MRI Scan - To assess the state of your health and a better picture of your spine.

Lung Function Test - To assess how well your lungs are working

Cardiac Assessment – To assess how well your heart is working (ECG)

When you come into the hospital the day before your surgery, you will meet many different people and have certain procedures / tests undertaken.

## Tests that will be undertaken:

Blood Sample for a full blood count and crossmatch. Your Consultant will have explained that this is a major surgery so there is a chance that you will lose some blood. This blood will be replaced in theatre during your surgery if needed.

Weight and Height - enables the Anaesthetist to determine how much medication will be required to send you to sleep.

## People You Will Meet:

- **Orthopaedic Clinical Nurse Specialist**  
Overall in charge of the planning and care given before and after your surgery.
- **Resident Medical Officer**  
Doctor who will make sure that you are well enough to undergo surgery.
- **Anaesthetist**  
Doctor who will send you to sleep during your operation and be in charge of your pain control after surgery.
- **Intensivist**  
Doctor who will take overall charge of your care for the first 12 hours after your surgery in the Intensive Care Unit.
- **Nurses**  
Will care for you and support you during your stay in hospital.
- **Physiotherapist**  
Will teach you some deep breathing exercises and encourage you to cough to keep your chest clear. In charge of your movement after your operation and will teach you how to get in and out of bed.
- **Orthotist**  
Will measure and fit you for your brace if required.

## **Preparing for your Operation**

Just before your operation, usually six hours, you will not be allowed to eat or drink anything, so that you have an empty stomach before the operation. You may feel very anxious, tearful and irritable which is very natural. Do not try to "bottle it up" please talk to someone and express your feelings.

### **Handy Hint!**

Always have a pen and paper on hand. When any questions come into your head, write them down and ask them when you see the right person!

## **After Your Operation**

After your operation you will go straight to the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU). Initially you may have five different tubes coming from you:

1. Naso-gastric Tube (NGT) - tube that goes down into your stomach.  
Reason - Your stomach and bowel will not be working properly yet, the NGT will remove all the liquid that might build up, preventing you from being sick.
2. Intravenous Infusion (IVI) - tube that goes into your vein, giving you fluid.  
Reason - Initially you will not be able to eat or drink, so the fluid will provide you energy.
3. Urinary Catheter – tube that goes into your bladder via the urethra which urine passes out, so you do not need to worry about going to toilet.
4. Intravenous Morphine Pump - gives a very strong drug that will control your pain.
5. Chest Drain – drains out any - fluid from the site of your operation.

On your road to recovery there are several hurdles which exist:

- starting to drink and eat again
- switching the Morphine infusion and going on to oral painkillers
- sitting up/standing up

Discuss these with the Clinical Nurse Specialist, Nurses and Physiotherapist.

Finally, you may or may not wear a brace after your operation, this will be decided by your consultant and you will be informed before or after you surgery.

## **Contact**

If you have any further questions please call Sue Charitou, Orthopaedic Paediatric Clinical Nurse Specialist on 020 7390 8115 or call 020 7580 4400 and ask for bleep 18.

## **Disclaimer**

Whilst this leaflet aims to provide you with useful advice and information it must be noted that it should only act as a guideline. Should you have any further concerns about this procedure, it is advisable that you discuss it with your Consultant.