

Treating Spinal Conditions

There are a variety of surgical approaches to treating spinal conditions. The choice of which approach to use is dependent on many factors which include patient symptoms, patient anatomy, prior surgery, and/or surgeon preference. PLIF is one of the options that your doctor may choose.

What is a PLIF?

Posterior Lumbar Interbody Fusion (PLIF) is a form of spine surgery in which the lumbar spine is approached through an incision on the back. This procedure is used to stabilize the spine by fusing two or more vertebrae together.

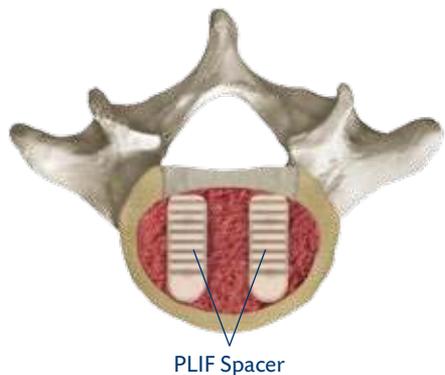
How is a PLIF Performed?

During the surgery the patient lies face down. First, the surgeon makes an incision in the skin of the back over the vertebra(e) to be treated. In a traditional PLIF, a 3-6 inch incision is typically required depending on the number of surgical levels. A small section of the bone and disc are removed to clear a pathway for the interbody spacers.

PLIF Spacer

Two interbody spacers are inserted into the disc space to aid in supporting areas between the vertebrae where the disc was removed. The function of the spacers is to stabilize the segment and to improve overall alignment of the spine. Increasing disc height also provides more room for the nerves. The central chamber and surrounding area is packed with bone graft material to help promote bone growth (fusion) between adjacent vertebrae.

A variety of different interbody spacer options are available. Talk to your doctor about which implants and techniques may be best to treat your condition.



Pedicle Screws and Rods

Pedicle screws and rods are used to hold the spinal segment in place while fusion occurs and for stability. The screws are inserted into the vertebrae to be fused. Bone graft may be added along the side of the vertebrae to support the fusion. The surgeon then closes the incision and moves the patient into recovery.



What Should I Expect with My Recovery?

Many patients will notice improvement of some or all of their symptoms and pain may diminish a few weeks after surgery. However, recovery time varies between patients.

Typically, it is the surgeon's goal for the patient to eventually return to his/her preoperative activities. A positive attitude, reasonable expectations and compliance with your doctor's post-surgery instructions may all contribute to a satisfactory outcome.

Please consult your physician to discuss clinical indications and contraindications for this type of surgery.