You will come to the clinic for x-rays and follow-up at 6 weeks, 3 months, 6 months, and one year after surgery, and then yearly for 4-5 years.

First 6 weeks
- Incision care – We often use stitches that dissolve over time. You will also have steri strips (paper tape) across your incision. The steri strips may fall off at any time. This is ok. You may take them off after three weeks. You will change your dressing every 3 days for 1 week until incision is dry. You will be shown how to do this. When the dressing is dry you no longer need a dressing. Your scar is very sensitive to sun, be sure to put extra sun screen on your scar if you are outside or it will burn.
- Bathing – For the first three weeks, sponge baths only. At three weeks you may shower. At four weeks you may soak in a bathtub.
- Activity – Plan for lots of walking. You may go up and down stairs and slowly increase the distance you walk. Lift nothing more than a gallon of milk. Do not twist, turn or bend. Do not drive until 6 weeks after surgery, and you are no longer using narcotic pain pills.

6 weeks to 3 months
- Begin faster walking, stationary biking and a stair climber. We highly recommend light aerobics 3-5 times a week.
- You may lift up to 10 pounds.
- You may begin bending, twisting and turning within your comfort zone. Do not lift anything while doing this.
- You may float in a pool or lake, but no swimming or diving.

3 months to 6 months
- 3 months – Begin light straight ahead jogging on a flat surface and light swimming.
- 4 months – Increase the intensity of your jogging and swimming. Increase weight lifting to weights you can lift 15 times.
- 5 months to 6 months – Resume your normal routines. Slowly increase your time in a new activity so your body can adjust and you can adjust to how your body is able to move. We do not recommend activities that place a load on the back with the back bent (i.e. jet skiing, hopping waves, snow mobiling over jumps, etc.). The point where the fused and unfused spine meets can be damaged. If you have any questions please give us a call.

This handout is meant to act as a guide. Please talk with your doctor about your plan of care. For questions please call (608)-263-6420.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person’s health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 9/2017. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF#6091