

DR. COOK ALIF/XLIF/SI JOINT FUSION INSTRUCTIONS/INFORMATION

The Surgery Center at

Sacred Heart Medical Park

36500 Emerald Coast Parkway
Destin, FL 32541
(850) 269-0301

Sacred Heart Hospital on the

Emerald Coast

7800 Emerald Coast Pkwy
Destin, FL 32550
(850) 278-3000

Fort Walton Beach Medical Center

1000 Mar Walt Drive
Fort Walton Bch, FL 32547
(850) 862-1111

Surgical Specialists, ASC

1034 Mar Walton Drive
Fort Walton Bch, FL 32547
(850) 315-9385

1. **NO SMOKING!** Numerous well-designed studies show that nicotine makes it harder for bones to heal and prevents successful fusion from occurring. Nicotine causes blood vessels to tighten and directly interferes with the bone healing process. For this reason, all forms of nicotine use must be stopped – this includes cigarettes, e-cigarettes, chewing tobacco, nicotine patches, and nicotine gum. The problem is nicotine itself. If you smoke or use nicotine products, quitting right away is one of the most important steps you can take to avoid complications and improve your recovery. Some medications, such as Chantix or Wellbutrin, may help with quitting, but these should be discussed with your doctor to see if they are right for you.
2. **Blood Thinners.** Blood thinner medications (anti-coagulants) should be stopped 7 - 10 days before surgery. Examples of anti-coagulants include Plavix, Lovenox, Heparin, Xarelto, Pradaxa, Aspirin, etc. Before discontinuing these medications, please speak with your primary care physician or cardiologist to ensure it is safe to do so. You can restart the prescribed anti-coagulant medications 3 days after the surgery.
3. **Anti-inflammatories.** You should avoid taking any non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) for 10 days before surgery and for the first 12 months after surgery. These medications can thin your blood, which makes surgery more difficult and increases risks. Common NSAIDs include Motrin, Ibuprofen, Advil, Aleve, Naproxen, Naprosyn, Celebrex, Vioxx, Etodolac, Lodine, Diclofenac, Meloxicam, and Mobic. Research studies have shown that these medications can decrease and even prevent bone healing and successful fusion from occurring. Other medications, such as steroids, should be avoided, but should only be discontinued at the discretion of your primary care physician.

4. **All Other Medications.** All other medications should be discontinued the day of surgery, except beta blockers. These medications help protect the heart after surgery, as shown in research studies. Beta blockers usually end in – 'lol', such as Metoprolol or Labetalol.
5. **Vitamins and Herbal Supplements.** All vitamins and herbal supplements (fish oil, St. John's wort, Multivitamins, etc.) should be discontinued at least 7-10 days before surgery. They should not be restarted until after the first postoperative visit.
6. **No Heavy Lifting.** Do not lift anything heavier than 10 pounds.
7. **No Twisting.** Do not twist at the waist for 12 weeks after surgery.
8. **The Postoperative Dressing.** The dressing that was applied at the time of the surgery is impregnated with silver and has anti-microbial properties. It is good for up to 7 days unless it is saturated with blood. When taking a shower, the dressing should be removed and placed wound side up on a bathroom counter. After the shower and after the wound has been appropriately dried, the dressing can be reapplied. A dry dressing can be applied to the surgical wound, if desired.
9. **Showers.** It is okay to take showers after 7 days; however, do not take baths or submerge the wound(s). The incision should not be vigorously scrubbed within the first 3 weeks. The incision area can be washed with a clean, soapy cloth before washing the rest of the body. Pat-dry the surgical wound with a clean, dry towel before drying off the rest of the body.
10. **Walking.** By three weeks after surgery, you should walk at least 1 mile each day. You can do this all at once or break it into smaller walks throughout the day. Walking helps lower the risk of blood clots (Deep Venous Thrombosis (DVT) and Venous Thromboembolism) and improves your overall recovery and fitness.
11. **Contact Orthopaedic Associates Immediately at (850) 863-2153 if the following occurs:**
 - A persistent fever develops and is greater than 101.5.
 - Uncontrolled pain despite taking pain medications as instructed.
 - Gross purulence (pus) drainage from the wound.
12. **Following up with Dr. Cook.** You should follow up with Dr. Cook approximately 3 weeks after your surgery. The purpose of this visit is to evaluate the wound, evaluate your overall level of pain, and taper the pain medication. Pain medications and muscle relaxers are to be taken only as needed.
13. **Postoperative Visits.** You will be seen, postoperatively, at the following times: 3 weeks, 8 weeks, 3 months, 6 months, and 1 year.

14. **Physical Therapy.** Muscular weakness or neurological symptoms often require time to improve. If there is minimal improvement or significant stiffness present by eight weeks postoperatively, we will consider initiating physical therapy. For patients whose jobs involve moderate to heavy lifting, we typically allow return to work before the eight-week mark. Alternatively, if work cannot resume early, we will begin physical therapy at eight weeks with an emphasis on a work-hardening program, aiming for a return to full duties at approximately three months postoperatively.
15. **Be Patient.** The primary goal of the surgery is to prevent your condition from getting worse. It is common for patients to notice significant improvement, sometimes immediately after surgery, but full symptom relief can take 9-12 months.
16. **After Surgery**, if you run low on pain medications, you must allow 72 hours for a refill. DO NOT wait until you are out of medication to call us. **The prescription request line is (850) 315-9241.**
17. If you have an illness before surgery (within the week of surgery), please notify our office, as your surgery may need to be rescheduled.
18. If an outpatient procedure is scheduled, please arrange to have someone with you at the Surgery Center, drive you home, and stay with you for 24 hours following the surgery. You must have a ride to and from the procedure by a responsible adult, friend, or family member. **You CANNOT use taxis, a ridesharing service (Uber, Lyft, etc.), or public transportation after surgery. We will not accept the liability, and your case will be cancelled.**
19. For urgent issues after hours or on weekends, please call **(850) 863-2153**, and the answering service will contact the physician on-call. **Do not leave a message.** Wait for the prompts, and you will be connected to the answering service.
20. Please bring your insurance information, a list of all prescription medications, and a picture ID with you on the day of surgery.
21. Cancelling or failing to attend any of the pre-surgery appointments coordinated for you may result in the cancellation of your scheduled surgery.

DATE OF SURGERY: _____

FACILITY: _____

ARRIVAL TIME: _____

() THE FACILITY WILL CALL 24-48 HOURS BEFORE SURGERY WITH YOUR ARRIVAL TIME