

Anterior Lumbar Interbody Fusion

Understanding Your Risks

This document outlines the potential complications associated with **anterior lumbar interbody fusion (ALIF) with posterior pedicle screw fixation**. This is a spine procedure performed through an incision in the lower abdomen to access the lumbar spine, during which the disc is removed and a spacer (interbody cage) filled with bone graft is placed between the vertebrae. Supplemental stabilization is achieved through placement of screws and rods through small incisions in the back to provide additional support and promote fusion. The usual purpose of surgery is to **relieve nerve compression, improve pain and neurologic symptoms, restore disc height, spinal stability and alignment, and promote solid fusion** in patients with conditions such as degenerative disc disease, spinal stenosis, spondylolisthesis, deformity, instability, or recurrent disc herniation.

Risks:

- **Neurologic complications** (new or worsened numbness, weakness, nerve injury, or cauda equina injury)
- **Dural tear with cerebrospinal fluid leak**
- **Wound infection** (superficial or deep)
- **Pseudoarthrosis** (nonunion or failure of fusion)
- **Hardware complications** (screw or rod loosening, breakage, malposition, or cage migration/subsidence)
- **Musculoskeletal (MSK) complications** (cage subsidence, endplate injury, facet violation)
- **Graft-related complications**
- **Adjacent segment degeneration or disease**
- **All-cause reoperation**
- **Ileus or bowel dysfunction**
- **Retrograde ejaculation** (in males)

- **Visceral injury** (bowel, ureter)
- **Major vascular injury** (arterial or venous injury, bleeding)
- **Medical complications** (myocardial infarction, stroke, pneumonia, pulmonary embolism, deep vein thrombosis)
- **Death** (extremely rare)

Risk Factors for Increased Complications:

- **Higher number of lumbar levels fused**
- **Revision or prior lumbar spine surgery**
- **Advanced age and higher ASA class**
- **Medical comorbidities** (diabetes, tobacco use, obesity, osteoporosis, kidney disease, anemia)

Patient Acknowledgment: By signing below, the patient acknowledges understanding of the above risks associated with anterior lumbar interbody fusion with posterior pedicle screw fixation and all questions have been answered to the patient's satisfaction.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Patient Name: _____ **DOB:** _____

