

Spinal
Decompression
Perth

by Perth Chiro Centre

Post-Appointment Spinal Decompression Patient Guide



Safe, proven, non-surgical help for:

- Bulging & herniated discs
- Chronic non-responsive cases
- Spinal degeneration
- Failed back surgery
- Facet syndrome

TGA
APPROVED

What can I expect from Spinal Decompression Therapy?

Some people will notice a slight stretching sensation to start with, others may not.

- We do start on a low setting of pull, to ensure your safety and comfort. Once you have been assessed that you can cope with this, on future visits we can steadily increase your setting, and during this time you may feel a gentle stretch.

• If you stop feeling a stretch it does not mean that the decompression table is not working, in fact your discs are still being pumped and your joints are still being opened, even when you feel no pull. The reason you may feel less of a stretch on a previous setting where you did feel a stretch is due to your ligaments adapting to the stretch. We need to see that you have adapted before we can increase your stretch force so that your back and neck are always safe.

• Due to the stretching of scar tissue sometimes you may get an increase of pain and stiffness while you are on the decompression table, or shortly after, however it will only be temporary lasting 24hrs. This is normal and, in fact, expected in some cases.

• As part of your care we expect that any leg pain or arm pain will centralise or recede to your lower back or neck. During this period you may feel that your arm or leg pain is getting better but that your back or neck pain is actually getting worse. This is normal and only temporary, and is a good sign that you are progressing.

What are the key indicators we look for to see if Spinal Decompression Therapy is working?

- Other key things that we look for, to show us that you are improving are:
 - ~ A decrease in pins and needles if you have any
 - ~ A decrease in any numbness
 - ~ A return to normal sensation
 - ~ An increase in function
 - ~ An increase in your range of motion

Do I use heat or ice?

For the initial acute inflammatory stage we recommend using ice at the rate of 10 minutes on, 10 minutes off, 10 minutes on, 10 minutes off.

Putting the ice on for longer than 10 minutes at a time, can have a negative effect (especially if you have the ice on for longer than 15 mins when you may actually get the opposite affect and get increased inflammation.

In the intermediate stage when you don't have so much inflammation you can then alternate between heat and ice. You will be advised when this is correct for you. Later on when there is much less inflammation and we are dealing with a low grade chronic problem, then heat applied for 20 minutes once or twice a day may be therapeutic.



What should I avoid when undergoing a Decompression Program?

- **Heavy (or even moderate) lifting**
 - **prolonged sitting!!!**
- **prolonged neck flexion** (e.g sitting at a keyboard without a break)
 - any posture that will cause pain or pressure on your spine.
 - straining on the toilet
- **bending or twisting when sneezing or coughing**

If we are treating your neck and you have to work at a keyboard or desk, you may find that using a neck brace while you are at work will reduce poor posture and support your neck.

We also advise that you avoid sleeping on your stomach, as this will put pressure on your discs and lower back and will delay your healing. We recommend sleeping on your side or back.

You need to avoid any straining on the toilet as this will increase the pressure in your discs. Constipation is to be avoided, so if you suffer from constipation, be sure to take a stool bulker softener such as Metamucil.

Will I make steady progress & notice improvements straight away?

The path to recovery is not always smooth. You may notice positive changes fairly quickly, and occasionally you may feel like you are getting worse.

There will likely be small micro-adhesion tears that could be occurring as we work through small areas of scar tissue around your spine. This will cause temporary pain after treatment.

What about back or neck support?

To assist your lumbar spine (low back) decompression we recommend a lumbar support brace during activities that cause pain.

You won't need to wear the back brace forever. However, in the first few weeks of treatment we highly recommend that you wear one during any activity that could injure your lower back further.

If you need to sit in the car or chair for any length of time, then it is essential that you have some lumbar support, and for this a lumbar cushion is ideal.

Does Spinal Decompression Therapy replace manual chiropractic adjustments?

If your spine needs a manual spinal adjustment and does not get it, you will not get the full benefit of the decompression therapy.

Your Chiropractor will have done a thorough examination and studied your X-rays, CT, MRI, so will be able to tell you if you need manual spinal adjustments.

If you need both a chiropractic adjustment and decompression in the one day, we recommend you have decompression first, followed by a chiropractic adjustment

How often will I need treatment?

Acute cases may require daily treatments to start with.

For most people three treatments each week will be enough initially. As you progress through your care, we work with you to reduce your treatments to twice per week.

Eventually you will be able to reduce down to weekly, then fortnightly, then once a month as maintenance.

This needs to be in consultation with your treating Chiropractor, as spreading out your visits too soon can be detrimental, so your Chiropractor will assess your spine as you progress and make changes to your frequency of care as soon as possible.

How can I speed up my healing & ensure longer term results?

For optimum health, the connective tissues around the discs require certain nutrients. The following products may help your progress. More information about nutrition can be found on our website blog.

- **MSM:** This naturally occurring chemical is a powerhouse when it comes to reducing swelling and inflammation, speeding up the healing process. Often found in supplements alongside glucosamine, MSM can help manage pain from osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis by keeping inflammation at bay.
- **Glucosamine / Chondroitin Sulfate:** These two are the dynamic duo of joint health. Glucosamine, derived from shellfish shells, strengthens cartilage and can slow down damage caused by disease or aging. Chondroitin sulfate works alongside glucosamine to ease spinal pain and keep your back in top shape.
- **Fish oil:** Packed with omega-3 fatty acids, fish oil is a natural anti-inflammatory superstar. Found in cold-water fish like salmon and tuna, as well as in supplements, these fats help control inflammation throughout the body
- **Gotu Kola:** This herb might be less familiar, but it's a secret weapon in promoting healing. It speeds up collagen formation, which is crucial for repairing and strengthening spinal discs. Think of it as your spine's best friend, giving it the boost it needs to heal faster.
- **Traumeel**, which is an anti-inflammatory rub, contains arnica and calendula. This helps to reduce inflammation around your joints and brings relief to achy muscles.

Exercise Do's & Don'ts

We recommend you **do not lift weights, jog, or do boot camp workouts until your chiropractor is happy that your discs have healed.**

In general, the order of rehab activities recommended would be:

- ~ gentle stretches
- ~ followed by gentle pilates or exercises from a Physiotherapist
- ~ followed by gentle yoga, beginner level, or
- ~ a gradual return to your favourite activities provided you do so under the guidance of your Chiropractor or Physiotherapist.

We recommend a visit with your Physiotherapist towards the end of your initial intensive stage of decompression therapy (after 10 wks of care).

Once your Chiropractor has reduced your sessions to weekly decompression treatments that is a good time to be assessed by your Physio for specific rehab exercises tailored to your exact needs.

We recommend you do join a Pilates class, this will help strengthen your core and reduce your chances of disc problems in the future but only after your initial stage of intensive spinal decompression therapy is over.

Are there any foods or drinks that I should avoid during my decompression program?

It is best to avoid drinking caffeine as it can irritate your nerve endings and make your disc more painful. If you are a tea drinker then Madura Tea is naturally low in caffeine and is available from supermarkets. We suggest you avoid alcohol, which can cause inflammation, while you are having decompression therapy.

Once your spine is better then light to moderate drinking may be resumed. Sugar can also increase inflammation and acidity which can contribute to pain, so avoiding sugar is ideal for maximum healing. Bubbly carbonated drinks also contribute to acidity which will increase your pain and stiffness, so avoid them for faster results.

For faster results the best beverage is water (2-3 litres per day) to provide your discs, ligaments and muscles with optimal hydration so they can heal quickly.

Smoking dramatically slows down your healing time and may even mean that you never become pain free from your spinal problem.

Beware of “The Danger Zone”

This is when you start to feel better and you think that you actually are better (but you are not quite there yet, only you don't realise this) and so you start to resume your daily activities too soon. Be careful in getting back to doing the things that you know you shouldn't be doing during the early stages of your care. Doing too much too soon can send you backwards and you can have a re-occurrence of your pain.

If you have a flare up then you need to:

- ~ get back in for treatment as soon as possible.**
- ~ apply ice 10 mins on and off.**
- ~ support the area with your back brace.**
- ~ ensure you take your nutritional support.**
- ~ avoid the activity that aggravated it.**

If you have any questions or concerns please ask your Chiropractor. We are here to support you in any way that we can, with the goal of you enjoying a return to better health as soon as possible.

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Our team is enthusiastic and committed to assisting you in reclaiming your quality of life.

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