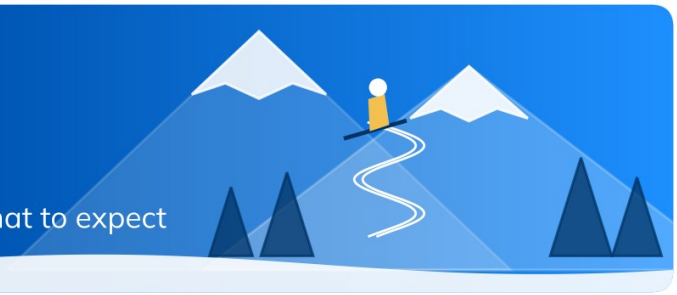
PATIENT INFORMATION

Back on the Slopes

Skiing after minimally invasive spine surgery: what to expect



Good news: most skiers can get back on the mountain after spine surgery. Without the back or leg pain that was holding you back, many enjoy their ski days **more** than before.

3 in 4

keep or improve their ski ability once back

8 in 10

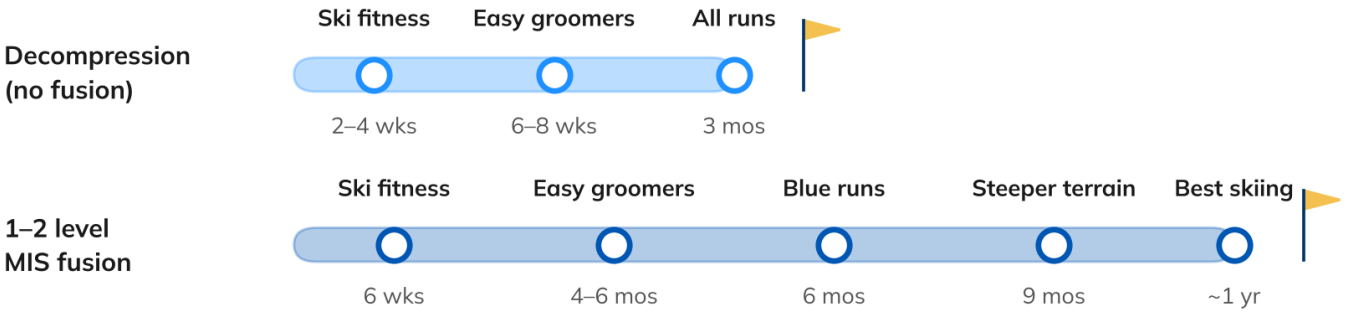
ski as many days a season or more

75%

average drop in back pain after surgery

Figures come from patients who had larger spinal fusions; smaller minimally invasive operations usually recover faster.

YOUR ROAD BACK TO THE SLOPES



Typical times; your surgeon will tailor the plan to your surgery and recovery.

WILL MY SKIING CHANGE?

- **Decompression (no fusion):** most people return to their usual skiing within about three months.
- **Fusion of one or two levels:** most skiers return once the bone has healed, usually around six months. Plan on easier runs first; your full range of terrain comes back over the first season.
- **Larger surgeries** can take a season or two. Even then, most who return ski as well and as often as before.

TIPS FOR A SAFE COMEBACK

- **Wait for the green light.** A fall puts real force on your spine, so let your surgeon confirm you have healed.
- **Get ski-fit first.** Build up your legs, core and balance with physical therapy before the season.
- **Start on groomed runs.** Skip moguls, jumps and icy or crowded slopes while you rebuild confidence.
- **Ski when you're fresh.** Most falls happen late in the day; take breaks and call it early.
- **Check your gear.** Have your bindings adjusted, and consider a back protector and a lesson to refresh your technique.

Based on published studies of athletes after spine surgery. Every patient is different; please follow your own surgical team's instructions.

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