

PLIF Procedure

PLIF stands for Posterior Lumbar Interbody Fusion. In this fusion technique, the vertebrae are reached through an incision in the patient's back (posterior). The PLIF procedure involves three basic steps:

- Pre-operative planning and templating. Before the surgery, the surgeon uses MRI and CAT scans to determine what size implant(s) the patient needs.
- Preparing the disc space. Depending on the number of levels to be fused, a 3-6 inch incision is made in the patient's back and the spinal muscles are retracted (or separated) to allow access to the vertebral disc. The surgeon then carefully removes the lamina (laminectomy) to be able to see and access the nerve roots. The facet joints, which lie directly over the nerve roots, may be trimmed to allow more room for the nerve roots. The surgeon then removes the affected disc and surrounding tissue and prepares bone surfaces of adjacent vertebrae for fusion.
- Implants inserted. Once the disc space is prepared, bone graft, allograft or BMP with a cage, is inserted into the disc space to promote fusion between the vertebrae. Additional instrumentation (such as rods or screws) may also be used at this time to further stabilize the spine.