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Recovering from back surgery, 2017 world all-around bronze medallist **Yelena Yeryomina** of Russia is eager to begin a rehabilitation program on March 12 with the possibility of full training in six months, coach **Vera Kiryashova** told IG.

Yeryomina underwent artificial disc replacement surgery February 12 in Munich, where surgeons stabilized the two lumbar vertebrae (L3-L4) and replaced the damaged disc with an artificial one. Doctors said the procedure was a success, Kiryashova said.

"The surgeons promised her that she would now be 'gold,'" said Kiryashova, who coaches Yeryomina with her husband, **Alexander Kiryashov**, in the Pushkin district of Saint Petersburg. "They were very sympathetic and attentive to Lena. They provided optimism and confidence in her future."



Yeryomina may credit some of her future success to East German gymnastics legend **Karin Büttner-Janž**, who pioneered the use of artificial discs to replace those damaged by injury or degenerative disease. Prior to Büttner-Janž's invention of the artificial disc in 1984, the standard course of treatment to replace a damaged disc was to remove it and replace it with bones, in order to fuse the vertebra on either side. Spinal fusion can lead to restricted movement and additional complications, and Büttner-Janž has been recognized by numerous organizations, including the International Olympic Committee, for her significant contributions to sports medicine.

Kiryashova said Yeryomina's rehab program will last up to six weeks, and that doctors believe she can resume a full training load in six months.

Yeryomina, who turns 17 on July 29, is looking forward to returning to the gym and continuing

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her quest for the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo, Kiryashova said. At last fall's world championships in Montreal, she took third all-around and won a silver medal on uneven bars.

"Lena is in a wonderful mood," Kiryashova told IG. "She follows all the events that occur in the gymnastics world, cheers for everyone, and hopes with optimism in the near future, when doctors allow it, to get back in line."

In December, two-time world vault champion **Maria Paseka** also underwent back surgery in Germany, where the Russian national team members frequently travel to consult top orthopedic surgeons.

*Read more on Yeryomina's surgery and prognosis in the April 2018 issue of International Gymnast magazine; and read "Perfect Harmony," a four-page profile on Yeryomina, in the January/February 2018 issue of International Gymnast magazine. To subscribe to the print or digital editions of International Gymnast magazine, or order back issues, [click here](#).*