

For Immediate Release

Minimally Invasive Spinal Fusions Squash Back Pain without Arduous Recovery
Dr. Daveed Frazier with Atlantic Spine Center offers tips on what to expect after spinal fusion surgery

West Orange, NJ, September 2015 – Spinal fusion surgery – which connects bones in the spine to eliminate chronic back pain – once required a long, arduous recovery. However, today's minimally invasive fusions achieve similar results as traditional techniques with a shorter hospital stay, less pain, less blood loss and minimal muscle damage. These advantages of minimally invasive surgery redeem the procedure's reputation, according to Daveed Frazier, MD, an orthopedic spine surgeon at Atlantic Spine Center.

The advent of minimally invasive back procedures more than a dozen years ago has given rise in recent years to a variety of spinal fusion surgeries necessitating only tiny incisions in a patient's back or side. Spinal fusions help vertebrae in the spine to grow together to eliminate motion between them that had previously caused pain.

"Spinal fusion is an effective method to manage a variety of back problems that require spinal stabilization, including those resulting from injury, trauma, infections and degenerative conditions," explains Dr. Frazier, who completed two spinal surgery fellowships and is a published author on spine disorders and treatment.

"Yet, until minimally invasive spinal fusions came along, open surgical techniques would cause extensive muscle and tissue injury that led to greater post-surgical pain and a lengthy recovery," he adds. "These newer techniques avoid many of those problems."

How is minimally invasive spinal fusion performed?

Known by a variety of names based on which area of the body is entered, minimally invasive fusion surgery can treat a long list of spinal conditions, including:

- Bulging discs
- Degenerative disc disease
- Disc tears
- Failed back and neck surgery
- Facet joint syndrome, degeneration and arthritic changes between the spine's facet joints
- Spinal stenosis, a narrowing of the spaces surrounding spinal nerves
- Spinal deformity

With many of these minimally invasive techniques, a patient's spine is approached through small incisions in the side or back. Using image guidance and advanced nerve equipment that ensures nerves aren't damaged, surgeons can remove target disc material and bone material, and then insert either bone graft, metal or plastic devices, or a combination of these products. This helps maintain proper space between vertebrae while the graft grows over time and fuses the spine.

"Instead of cutting and moving muscles, as in traditional surgery, the minimally invasive procedures more gently spread the muscles to allow access to the spine," Dr. Frazier says. "This is much less painful and leads to less blood loss and a quicker return to walking around and regular activities."

What to expect after minimally invasive fusion surgery

In head-to-head comparisons, minimally invasive spinal fusion surgery beats traditional open surgery in nearly every respect, Dr. Frazier says. Here's what patients can expect after the minimally invasive procedures:

- Outpatient procedure or 1-2 day hospital stay, vs. 3-5 days with open surgery

- Up and walking on the day of surgery, vs. 2-4 days after surgery
- A 4-6 week recovery, vs. 6 months or longer

Every type of surgery carries risks, but the risks of minimally invasive spinal fusion procedures are minimal and rare when performed by highly qualified surgeons.

“On the other hand, these techniques often lead to an immediate improvement in patients’ back pain symptoms,” Dr. Frazier says. “The development of procedures that have minimized tissue trauma without compromising the effectiveness of spinal surgery stand as a pivotal advancement in the field of spine surgery.”

Atlantic Spine Center is a nationally recognized leader for endoscopic spine surgery with several locations in NJ and NYC.
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