

Muscle-Sparing Spine Surgery

A Powerful Option for Banishing Back Pain

An aching back is one of the most common complaints that send Americans to the doctor's office. But chronic back pain, sometimes experienced as leg pain, can have many causes, so getting a correct diagnosis may involve a certain amount of trial and error. Your doctor may first try anti-inflammatory medication, then refer you to a physical therapist, an orthopedist or a neurologist.

If those approaches don't work, an MRI—magnetic resonance imaging—may be ordered to determine if you suffer from degenerative disc disease, which occurs when one of the discs that act as shock absorbers between the bony vertebrae of the spine is not doing its job. People who suffer from this condition experience chronic low back pain that is aggravated by sitting, bending, lifting or twisting, or suffer from pain, numbness, tingling and fatigue in the legs.

For years surgeons have treated degenerative disc disease by removing the disc and fusing the unstable vertebrae together, something that can be accomplished by implanting screws and



Dr. Mudiyam points to new hardware in Kathy's spine.

other hardware or by inserting bone graft material.

"This stabilized the spine, but it required making a large incision in the patient's back and cutting through the muscles around the vertebrae. And if you avoided the muscles by going in through the abdomen, you risked causing vascular injury," explains Fountain Valley Regional Hospital orthopedic spine surgeon Ram Mudiyam, M.D., M.B.A. "Today a procedure called XLIF® (eXtreme Lateral Interbody Fusion) allows us to achieve the same results by going in through the patient's side. We make two small incisions and access the damaged disc by passing between the muscle fibers.

"This minimally disruptive approach

"Thanks to the muscle-sparing XLIF® procedure, I experienced only a few weeks of mild discomfort and went back to driving seven weeks after the operation."

reduces postoperative pain and recovery time, two obstacles that have made people suffering from back pain reluctant to undergo surgery that could give them their lives back." The XLIF® procedure is also used to treat other spine problems, including complex spinal deformity and misaligned vertebrae whose slippage pinches the nerves of the spine.

Kathy Tachibana, a recent patient of Dr. Mudiyam's, swears by the procedure...and by her surgeon. "It started with my legs hurting," she says. "I was not doing well as far as walking was concerned, and I was getting very tired. My back didn't

really hurt, but I was aware of it all the time." The surgery performed by Dr. Mudiyam stopped the leg pains, and thanks to the muscle-sparing XLIF® procedure, Tachibana says she experienced only a few weeks of mild postoperative discomfort. She went back to driving seven weeks after the surgery.

She says she agreed to tell her story to help others. "There are so many people who have back problems and are afraid to get spine surgery," she explains. "My advice for them is, if you need it, don't be afraid of it. You don't have to take those terrible drugs, and you don't have to suffer."

Among the surgical offerings at Fountain Valley Regional Hospital, many of which can be done using minimally invasive techniques, are

- ▶ Spine fusion to reduce pain and provide stability and mobility to the back
- ▶ Total disc replacement to replace damaged or worn-out discs
- ▶ Kyphoplasty and vertebroplasty using bone cement to stabilize fractured vertebrae
- ▶ Laminectomy and laminoplasty to relieve spinal stenosis, a narrowing of the spine that puts pressure on nerves and causes pain
- ▶ Removal of tumors on the spine
- ▶ Spine reconstructive surgery

Spine surgeons currently on staff at the hospital are

- Robert Ahearn, M.D.
- Edward Thomas Chappell, M.D.
- Mitchell Cohen, M.D.
- Frank Coufal, M.D.
- Zafar Khan, M.D.
- A. Michael Moheimani, M.D.
- Ram Mudiyam, M.D.
- Tien T. Nguyen, M.D.
- Anatol Podolsky, M.D.
- David Propst, M.D.
- Muralidhara Raju, M.D.
- Minh Tran, M.D.
- Frank Kevin Yoo, M.D.

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