

— Your Health —

## Surgical options relieve neck pain

Options in spinal surgery for injuries to the neck include a traditional spinal fusion and an advanced artificial disk replacement.

A disk in the spine has a center area called the nucleus surrounded by a tough outer portion. It functions as a shock absorber between the vertebrae. When a disk ruptures, or becomes herniated, the compressible disk tissue can spread into the spinal canal and press against nerves or the spinal cord, causing numbness, weakness or pain.

Spinal surgeons have reported that artificial disk replacement works as well as and often better than spinal fusion surgery. A spinal fusion requires a longer recovery, and the patient must wear a neck brace. With artificial disk replacement, a neck brace is not required and recovery is more rapid. Spinal fusion locks the vertebrae together, so that the fused bones can move only as a unit. An artificial disk preserves the spine's mobility and shares the loads exerted on the spine. This reduces the probability of needing a future surgery.

A young person having a spinal fusion might need another operation in a few years. This is because fusion adds a little stress in the spine above and below the fusion site, so that bone in those locations can break down a little more rapidly than normal. With artificial cervical disk replacement, the preservation of motion might protect against greater stress at other levels of the spine.



**Dr. Deven Khosla**

If you suffer from neck and back pain, you might benefit from seeking treatment.

Answering the following questions will let you know whether you should seek this treatment.

Do you have neck or back pain that limits you in performing daily functional activities, such as dressing, bathing and grooming?

Do you have neck or back pain that restricts you from performing any recreational activities, such as hiking or sports?

Do you have neck or back pain that restricts you from performing any daily household activities, such as laundry, vacuuming and cleaning?

Do you have pain at night that significantly interferes with your sleeping?

Do you have pain, burning, shooting pain, ache, numbness or tingling in your arms or legs?

Have you noticed weakness in your arms or legs?

Have you noticed significant loss of balance or difficulty walking?

Do you have a weakness in

the foot or "foot drop?"

Have you experienced loss of bowel or bladder control?

If you answered "Yes" to at least one of these questions, contact the Northern Nevada Medical Center Spine Center of Excellence at 356-6662 to schedule an appointment. If you are experiencing the symptoms in questions 6 through 9, you might need an immediate referral to a spine surgeon.

The Spine Center of Excellence provides a comprehensive program designed to reduce your neck and back pain and restore you to a healthy, active lifestyle. NNMC's Spine Center of Excellence is the only local program certified in spine surgery by The Joint Commission.

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