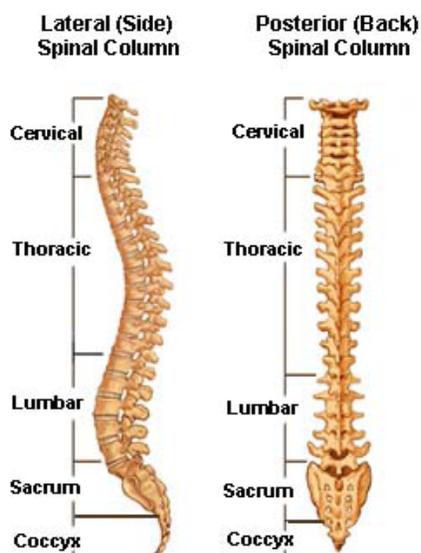


SPINAL FUSION

What is Spinal Fusion?

The spine is made up of a series of bones called vertebrae. Between each vertebra are strong connective tissues which hold one vertebra to the next and act as a cushion between the vertebrae. Fusion is a surgical technique in which one or more of the vertebrae are united or fused so that motion no longer occurs between the vertebrae. During spinal fusion surgery bone grafts are placed around the spine. The basic idea is to fuse together painful vertebrae so that they heal into a single, solid bone. Spinal fusion is done most commonly in the lumbar region of the spine, but it is also used to treat cervical and thoracic problems.



Possible Causes of Spinal Pain?

- Degenerative disk disease
- Spondylolisthesis – anterior or posterior displacement of a vertebra
- Spinal Stenosis
- Scoliosis or Kyphosis - spinal curves or slippages.
- Fractured vertebra
- Weak or unstable spine caused by infection or tumors.
- Disc Herniation

How is it Diagnosed?

Your doctor may order tests such as X-rays, computed tomography (CT), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), Electromyography (EMG) to help diagnose where your pain is coming from .

What are the Treatment Options?

Fusion is considered only after other conservative (non-surgical) measures have failed. There are many surgical approaches and methods to fuse the spine, all involve placement of a bone graft between the vertebrae. The spine may be approached either from the back (posterior) or from the front (anterior) or a combination of both. Fusion may or may not involve the use of supplemental hardware such as plates, screws and cages.

Protecting Your Repair

The patient's cooperation and activity modification are critical elements impacting the success of a spinal fusion. The fusion process takes time. It may be several months before the bone is solid. During this healing time, the fused spine must be kept in proper alignment. You will be taught how to move properly, reposition, sit, stand and walk. Your symptoms and activity will improve gradually. Smoking, medications and your overall health can affect the rate of healing and fusion.

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