Who should have spine surgery?

Spine surgery may be an option for people experiencing pain or other symptoms that disrupt their quality of life. Spine surgery may also be necessary for people who have broken or cracked vertebrae, damaged or slipped discs, spinal tumors, or a spinal deformity such as scoliosis. Often, patients have tried other treatments, such as physical therapy, medications, and injections, but have not experienced relief from their symptoms. Memorial Spine™ is a center of excellence for spine surgery and the treatment of spine conditions. We often operate on people with the following conditions:

**DISC DISEASE** – The gradual deterioration or bulging of intervertebral discs that occurs with age or as a result of injury. This may put pressure on a nerve and cause low back pain, pain radiating to buttocks or legs, muscle weakness, or loss of bowel and bladder function. Symptoms are often worse in the morning or after sitting or standing for extended periods of time. Symptoms may decrease while walking or lying down.

**SPONDYLOLISTHESIS** – One vertebra slips forward in relation to an adjacent vertebra. This may put pressure on a nerve and cause low back pain, pain radiating to buttocks or legs, muscle weakness, or loss of bowel and bladder function. These symptoms will often get worse with activity.

**SPINAL STENOSIS** – Narrowing of the canal that surrounds the spinal cord or nerve roots caused by loss of disc height, enlargement of the joints, arthritis, bone spurs, or the calcification of ligaments in the spine. This may put pressure on a nerve and cause low back pain, pain radiating to buttocks or legs, muscle weakness, or loss of bowel and bladder function. Symptoms may be brought on by standing or walking and may improve with rest, sitting, or leaning forward.

The Center of Excellence for Spine Surgery at Memorial University Medical Center offers comprehensive spine surgery and follow-up care. Our program includes a team of specialists working together to provide evidence-based medicine with proven outcomes. Our goal is to help you get back on your feet and back to a fulfilling, productive life.

Memorial University Medical Center is a 610-bed academic medical center with a Level 1 trauma center, state-of-the-art surgical services, a major medical education program, and award-winning clinical outcomes.
What is spine surgery?
Spine surgery involves operating on the spinal column to repair an injury or correct a deformity. There are many different types of spine surgery, but they can be grouped into four main categories. Most spine surgeries involve a combination of two or more of these procedures:

**SPINAL FUSION** – Surgically removing a deteriorated disc and fusing the two adjacent vertebrae together so that there is no movement between them. Our surgeons offer minimally invasive spinal fusion that can result in faster recovery times and a decreased risk of complications.

**DISCECTOMY** – Removing all or part of a damaged disc to relieve pressure on the spine and nerves. Our surgeons offer minimally invasive discectomy or microdiscectomy that can result in faster recovery times and a decreased risk of complications.

**LAMINECTOMY** – Removing all or part of the bone around the spinal cord to relieve pressure on the spinal cord and nerves.

**DISC REPLACEMENT** – Replacing a damaged disc with an artificial version. An artificial disc restores disc height and movement between the vertebrae. Disc replacement is not a viable option for everybody, and is only used in certain cases.

How long will I be in the hospital?
The average hospital stay after spine surgery is less than 2 days. Most patients are able to go home either the same day or the day after surgery. Because every person’s body is different, you may require a longer hospital stay. You will be encouraged to begin walking around within a few hours of your surgery and continue to build your tolerance for walking over the next couple of weeks. Your physician may request that you begin a course of physical therapy, wear a brace, and/or avoid certain movements and activities such as lifting. You will be asked to follow up with your surgeon within 10 to 14 days.

What are the risks involved?
As with any surgery, some risk is involved. There is a risk of infection. To prevent it, we use powerful antibiotics. We follow specific standards of care that are clinically proven to reduce the risk of surgical complications. You can view our surgical outcomes online at memorialhealth.com/spine.

How much pain will I experience?
Thanks to advances in medication, we are able to provide a great deal of pain relief after surgery. You will experience some discomfort, but it is our goal to have your pain under control before leaving the hospital.

How can I prepare for surgery?
It is important for people undergoing spine surgery to have a clear understanding of the surgical process, preparation, and recovery. At Memorial Spine, we have found that well-informed patients and families are key to a successful surgery. Our pre-surgical class prepares patients and families for surgery and introduces them to our interdisciplinary care team, including the surgical team, specially trained nurses, physical and occupational therapists, pharmacists, dietitians, case managers, and a care coordinator.

Pre-surgical classes are held Mondays at 2 p.m., Tuesdays at 2 p.m., Wednesdays at 10 a.m., and Fridays at 11 a.m. Call 912-350-0186 for more information. We also offer a free, interactive spine surgery video created by our partner, Emmi Solutions, on our website at memorialhealth.com/spine.

Patient Outcomes
At Memorial Spine, we are proud to share our medical outcomes and patient feedback. We track outcomes for up to two years after surgery to ensure that our patients’ results are good. Our patient-reported outcomes show that 82% of lower back surgery patients and 84% of neck surgery patients report significant or statistically significant improvement three months post-surgery. These outcomes improve at the six-month and one year follow-up survey.

Our patient satisfaction reports show that 87% of our patients would “definitely recommend” Memorial and 89% report overall satisfaction. In addition, 91% of patients felt the hospital staff did “everything to control pain.” These scores are all significantly higher than the average score for the Georgia hospitals database. Also, 98% of our spine surgery patients go directly home after surgery. For more information on our patient outcomes, please visit our website at memorialhealth.com/spine.

Accolades
Memorial Spine has earned numerous accolades for the care provided to its patients. We earned the Joint Commission’s Gold Seal of Approval™ for spinal fusion and microdiscectomy. Other accolades include:

- **Blue Distinction Center for spine surgery by Blue Cross Blue Shield**
- **UnitedHealth Premium Surgical Spine Specialty Center designation from UnitedHealthcare**
- **Designated an Aetna Institute of Quality for spine surgery**

Why should I choose Memorial University Medical Center?
Memorial Spine offers a comprehensive spine surgery program. Our compassionate team will guide you through the entire process. We will contact you before surgery to answer any questions you have. While you’re here, we will treat you with dignity and respect, share information with you, and allow you and your family to be involved in your care. Our highly trained surgeons, nurses, and therapists will follow evidence-based guidelines that lead to the best possible result. We understand that spine surgery is a major undertaking for you and your family, and we will be with you every step of the way.