

1. Target Keyword: Minimally invasive spine surgery versus traditional back surgery

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Traditionally, back surgery has been a harrowing ordeal, taking a long time to perform and a very long time to recover from. However, this is no longer necessarily the case. New innovations now allow for minimally invasive spinal surgeries: outpatient procedures that are faster, easier, and can even use localized anesthetic. So can you have a minimally invasive procedure done instead of the much longer, more complicated surgery that doctors are saying you need? That depends. Here's a basic rundown of minimally invasive spine surgery versus traditional back surgery.

A minimally invasive procedure uses a smaller incision than traditional surgery. It often involves endoscopy--that is, looking inside the body using remote cameras and other tools. These tools allow the doctor to see the area clearly that needs to be operated on, including muscles, nerves, and surrounding tissue, without cutting the patient wide open.

There are different types of minimally invasive procedures for different afflictions. Laser spine surgery is used to treat herniated discs and other disc-related problems. It's designed for removal of a disc or bone without disturbing the surrounding soft tissue. It's an outpatient procedure, meaning the patient can be in and out of the hospital on the same day, rather than staying overnight. There's a follow-up appointment the next day and care to perform at home, but the patient can be back to work and their normal, daily routine in as little as a few days.

Micro spine surgery uses a microscope to operate on cells and tissues that are too small to be seen with the naked eye. As such, it's a precision procedure, and is performed without any cutting of muscles or ligaments, and without any removal or fusion of bones. It's often done to fix a pinched nerve, and can alleviate not just back pain, but leg, neck, and arm pain as well. It's also an outpatient procedure, and may be performed with either local or general anesthetic, depending on the extent of the surgery.

When it comes to minimally invasive spine surgery versus traditional back surgery, it would appear that minimally invasive procedures win hands down. So why isn't it used all the time? Well, first of all, not all back patients are candidates for minimally invasive treatment. Sometimes the patient requires spinal fusion, which is the rather extensive ordeal that constitutes traditional back surgery. It involves things like bone grafts, as well as implants of titanium screws and other items. It requires general anesthesia and often several months of recovery, and should only be used as a last resort.

Additionally, though minimally invasive procedures are easier for the patient,

they're more difficult for the surgeon. As such, it's not taught as widely, and there are few doctors who can perform it accurately. Still, talk to your doctor about minimally invasive spine surgery versus traditional back surgery. See if you may be a candidate, and if there's someone who can perform the procedure for you. The potential benefits make it worth looking into.

2. Target Keyword: Tips for minimizing back pain when you sit at a desk all day

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Working in an office can be terrible for your spine. Especially if your workplace isn't optimized for good back alignment, it can lead to terrible pain and, over time, some serious permanent back problems. Even if your office IS designed to be ergonomic, your own bad habits can work against you and lead to problems.

Fortunately, there are a number of things you can do to counteract these problems and keep your back healthy and strong. Here are 5 tips for minimizing back pain when you sit at a desk all day.

1. **Use correct posture.** Slouching, leaning back, or sitting at otherwise odd angles wreaks havoc on your spine. Be sure you sit so that your thighs lie flat and are parallel with the ground. Keep your feet flat on the ground, and bend your forearms so that your elbows are parallel with the floor.
2. **Get an ergonomic chair.** Most chair backs are straight and flat, but your spine has a natural inward curve. If possible, get a chair that's designed to accommodate that curve and can be adjusted to your back's specific needs. Not only will these chairs reduce lower back pain and increase general comfort, they can also improve your circulation.
3. **Use a hands-free headset.** As you talk on the phone, the natural tendency is to crane your neck towards the receiver. Particularly if you have a job where you use the phone a lot, this can cause tremendous pain over time. Switching to a hands-free headset is a great way to keep your neck in line.
4. **Stretch.** There are a number of stretches you can do for your back after a long day at work that help alleviate pain. Try rotating your shoulders forwards and backwards, or lying face up on the floor and pulling your knees in towards your chest with your arms. Do a little online research or consult with your chiropractor to find other stretches that will work for you.
5. **Keep active.** None of the tips for minimizing back pain when you sit at a desk all day will do any good if you really are just sitting all day. No matter what kind of chair you have or adjustments you make, the mere act of sitting for that long will cause muscle atrophy, which contributes to back

pain. So every half hour or so, get up and do something, just for a couple of minutes. Go to the restroom or the break room. Take a walk around the office. Do anything, just so long as you're active.

These tips for minimizing back pain when you sit at a desk can help, but they're still only tips. If after putting these ideas into practice, your back continues to give you problems, talk to a chiropractor immediately. There might be some deeper spinal issue at work. Or it could simply be because everyone's back is different. A good chiropractor can help you find the office practices and stretches that work best for you.

3. Target Keyword: The elderly and back pain

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As you get older, your body begins to wear out. Older people require increased medical attention and are increasingly susceptible to disease. There's also an increase in general pain in the limbs, joints, and particularly the back. The connection between the elderly and back pain can't be denied, and it's often the cause of mobility problems and other issues.

The causes of back pain in older people tend to be different than what they are for the young, and as such, they require different treatments. In younger people, the problem is often to do with distortion of the discs between the vertebrae. As you get older, distortion is less likely due to loss of water content in the discs. However, there is a general degeneration of the lower back, and other problems that go along with it.

Here are some of the most common causes of back pain in the elderly.

- **Uncomplicated Mechanical Low Back Pain.** The most common type of back pain in the elderly, this is pain that's not associated with any particular disease or ailment. It's generally just a symptom of the body wearing out over time, and is made worse by bending, stretching, and walking. Fortunately, this can generally be treated just with rest, and by finding a more comfortable sleeping position.
- **Osteoporosis.** One of the most common connections between the elderly and back pain, osteoporosis is a decrease in bone mineral density that makes the bones more fragile and prone to breaking. It most commonly affects women over 75, though it can affect men as well. It can cause compression failure, i.e. a collapse of the vertebrae. The symptoms are sudden back pain, as well as shooting pain due to compression of the nerve. The most common treatment is a back brace that allows the bones

- time to heal, as well as certain drugs such as calcitonin. In certain cases, minimally invasive surgical treatments may also be used.
- **Sciatica.** Sciatica affects the lower back and can radiate down one leg as well. It involves a compression or irritation of the sciatic nerves. In addition to the pain, other symptoms include tingling and numbness, as well as difficulty moving the lower body. It can be caused by a narrowing of the spinal canal, or degeneration of the lower vertebrae, both of which tend to happen over time and are thus more common in the elderly. Depending on the type of sciatica and the cause, medication may be prescribed, or simply rest and some physical therapy. In other cases, laser spinal surgery may be used to treat it, or sometimes cortisone injections.

When dealing with the elderly and back pain, it's important to be on guard. When you're younger, lower back pain may take you out of work for a day or two, but after a bit of rest, it can be as good as new. In the elderly, any form of back pain warrants attention. It might be nothing. But if left untreated, it can end up causing permanent damage.

4. Target Keyword: When pain treatments/medication for your back no longer work, how should you proceed?

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You've lived with back pain for a while now. You've been on a number of different pain medications of increasing strength. They worked for a while, but eventually they all stopped. Maybe you've built up a tolerance, or maybe there's a deeper problem at work. Either way, the pain is unbearable, and you need to do something about it. So when pain treatments/medication for your back no longer work, how should you proceed? You have several options.

Physical Therapy

There are a few kinds of physical therapy that help alleviate and ultimately eliminate chronic back pain. They include stretches and other exercises, as well as machines or traction. In addition to going to a physical therapist a couple of times a week, there are usually exercises you can perform at home on your own to aid in recovery.

You also learn how to correct bad posture habits and start exercising regularly. Without these things, physical therapy won't ultimately help anything. The goal is to get to the point where therapy is no longer necessary.

Spine Manipulation

A chiropractor can use special tools or even just their hands to help get the spine back into the position it needs to be, and reduce pain. It's more common for acute (i.e. temporary) back pain than for chronic pain, but it can be used in either case, depending on the situation. Just like with physical therapy, though, there are certain health and lifestyle changes that go along with it, in order to keep your back healthy and pain-free for good.

Surgery

If other treatments for your back aren't working, you may need to have surgery. Traditionally, spinal surgery has a reputation for being complicated and painful, with a long recovery time. But that's not necessarily the case anymore. There are minimally invasive outpatient spinal surgeries that are quick and safe. They don't require screws, plates, or rods in your back, and can even be performed with only local anesthesia.

With micro spine surgery, the problematic cells and tissues are operated on directly, without cutting into the muscles and ligaments, or fusing or removing any bone. Laser spine surgery, on the other hand, is designed to remove damaged discs and bone without harming any of the surrounding tissue. It employs a tiny camera to view the surgical area and is used for things such as herniated discs.

Unfortunately, these outpatient surgeries aren't applicable to every type of spinal issue, and traditional spinal surgery is still necessary in some cases. Ask your doctor whether a minimally invasive surgical method might help in your case.

That is, in fact, an essential component in each of these treatments. If you're experiencing chronic back pain and pain treatments and medications for your back no longer work, talk to your doctor and/or chiropractor and try to get to the bottom of what's going on. If left unchecked, it can develop into something more serious. But it could be something with an easy fix. In the end, there's no reason why you need to keep living with chronic back pain.