

A Breakthrough for Back Pain Sufferers

Chronic lower back pain affects 65 million Americans every year, and roughly 85 percent of those older than age 50 experience some degree of disc degeneration. For some, it may become disabling.

artificial disc replacement (ADR) is a relatively new solution for back pain sufferers that offers several benefits compared to spinal fusion, the procedure traditionally used to treat back pain due to disc degeneration for patients who fail to find relief with conservative treatment.

During spinal fusion surgery, the damaged disc is replaced with bone, which then grows together, or fuses, with the surrounding vertebrae. With ADR, the surgeon makes an incision in the front of the abdomen to access the spine. The damaged disc is then removed, and the artificial disc — which consists of two metal endplates separated by a plastic cushion inlay — is secured to the bone. Following surgery, the patient's natural movement is allowed to continue while the spine heals around the implant. His or her weight compresses the plastic inlay over time, and the spine grows around the endplates.

ADR dramatically reduces recovery time and the likelihood of requiring additional operations. The procedure also allows patients to maintain their natural range of motion.

"Experience has shown artificial disc replacement to be as safe as spinal fusion with the added benefit of restoring more normal function," says Jack Zigler, M.D., orthopedic spine surgeon and co-director of the Center for Disc Replacement at the Texas Back Institute on the campus of Texas Health Spine & Orthopedic Center. "In addition, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has put these discs through much more aggressive clinical trials than the rods and screws used in traditional surgical implants to ensure their safety and effectiveness."

THE RIGHT CHOICE FOR YOU

If you find yourself giving up everyday activities due to chronic pain, and if conservative measures fail to correct the pain over the course of six months, ADR may be an option for you. While surgeons have not determined the exact life span of artificial discs, studies suggest they may last longer than 20 years.

For more information, call the Texas Health Spine & Orthopedic Center at (888) 608-4762.



Jack Zigler, M.D.

"Historically, most people who experienced disabling back pain would live with it, but that doesn't have to be the case. If weight loss, exercise and medication cannot relieve the pain, and if it becomes so unbearable that it interferes with your daily life, artificial disc replacement may be an option. This procedure is safe and has been found to restore nearly normal function in most patients, which allows them to continue the activities they enjoy."

—Jack Zigler, M.D., orthopedic spine surgeon and co-director of the Center for Disc Replacement at the Texas Back Institute on the campus of Texas Health Spine & Orthopedic Center

