

Cervical Disc Replacement

Will I Need Physical Therapy After Cervical Disc Replacement?

If you were able to function independently before surgery, it is unlikely that you will need physical therapy after you leave the hospital. However, if you had gait problems and long-term nerve compression, you may need physical therapy for gait training and strengthening. Physical therapy is often recommended for anyone who has significant difficulty with pain or mobility. Most likely you will be seen by a physical therapist before discharge from the hospital and if necessary, home health or out-patient physical therapy arrangements will be made for you.

Are There Other Factors That I Should Consider Before Undergoing Cervical Disc Replacement Surgery?

Cervical disc replacement surgery is a relatively new procedure, and the long-term results are still unclear. In particular, it is not known how long the artificial discs will function in the body, the consequences of inevitable wear and tear, nor whether preserving motion rather than doing a fusion will accomplish the results that surgeons hope will occur.

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(Continued from flap)

There is no guarantee that cervical disc replacement will permanently relieve neck or arm pain or that adjacent discs may not develop abnormalities causing pain and requiring further surgery.

What if I Have Other Questions?

Just give us a call. We'll be happy to answer any questions you may have. And be sure to ask us about our upcoming seminars on back and neck pain – we'd love to see you!



901 East 18th Street • Tifton, Georgia
229-353-BONE (2663) or 888-807-0101
www.TRMCortho.com

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What is Cervical Disc Replacement?

Cervical disc replacement is the surgical procedure in which a worn or damaged intervertebral disc in the neck is replaced by an artificial disc designed to allow continued motion of that part of the spine. The artificial disc is made of two metal components, with or without a plastic spacer in between. The metal plates are attached to the vertebrae that sit above and below the damaged disc. Your spine surgeon performs the surgery through an incision made in the front of your neck.

Who is a Candidate for Cervical Disc Replacement?

You may be a candidate for cervical disc replacement if your discomfort is primarily due to neck pain, arm and shoulder pain, or weakness in the arms and shoulders which has not been alleviated by more conservative treatment measures.



Cervical disc replacement surgery is designed to replace the damaged disc while preserving the natural movement of the neck (unlike cervical fusion in which the natural movement of the vertebrae is eliminated). Bone quality must be good with minimal effects of osteoporosis; therefore candidates for disc replacement are generally younger than 65 years old. Not every condition involving painful damaged discs can be treated with disc replacement. Your spine surgeon will carefully evaluate your condition and discuss any options with you.

How Long is the Recovery Period?

Recovery time varies from person to person. You may begin walking right after surgery and gradually resume some activities as you feel comfortable.

By four to six weeks post-op, many people are back to their pre-op level of activities. Walking is one of the best activities that can begin right away. Start by walking around your house and progress to outside and longer distances. You can typically use a treadmill and return to your normal activities by four weeks. An active lifestyle will help to keep your bones and muscles strong which will help prevent future injury. You should discuss specifics with your surgeon.

What are the Possible Complications or Risks of Cervical Disc Replacement?

While uncommon, complications can occur during and after surgery. During surgery, the nerves and spinal cord are exposed making the risk of nerve injury possible. Other complications that may occur with any surgery include wound infection, blood loss requiring transfusions, blood clots and even death in rare cases. General medical issues such as pneumonia or heart issues can be precipitated by surgery especially if you have prior problems. Your surgeon and health care team will be taking great care to help prevent these and other complications.

Will I Need a Blood Transfusion?

Not usually. Blood transfusions are rarely necessary for cervical disc replacement.

