



## Disk Replacement Surgery Offers Relief From Back and Neck Pain



Are back and neck pain making your life miserable? If so, you are not alone.

Back pain affects about 80 percent of adults at some time in their lives, and about 50 percent of people experience neck pain. Back pain and neck pain are among the most common reasons for doctor visits, and are major causes of disability, lost work days and high healthcare costs.

If you experience such pain, cervical disc replacement surgery may be a possible remedy, but you need to find out if you are a candidate for this procedure.

According to Sonny Gill, M.D., of Village Orthopaedic Surgery, the procedure (FDA approved for single level replacement in the neck) can help “maintain motion of the neck and spine and possibly fight degeneration of the adjacent discs.” For those with disc degeneration, there can also be arm weakness, pain and numbness from pressure on the cervical nerve roots. This pain may be greatly improved or gone after the disc replacement procedure.

“It’s not for everyone,” says Dr. Gill, “but those who choose the surgery are pleased with the new lease on life they may have after it.” Unlike fusing the discs, the surgery can “keep motion at that level of the spine” and theoretically not stress the discs above and below it.

Recovery can be shorter and a little easier for many patients who choose the surgery. “Bracing can be easier because recovering patients oftentimes only need a soft collar rather than the standard (stiff) collar,” Dr. Gill adds.

Cervical disc disease is caused by an abnormality in one or more discs — the cushions — that lie between the neck bones (vertebrae). When a disc is damaged — due to arthritis, degeneration or an unknown cause — it can lead to neck pain from inflammation or muscle spasm.

Surgery for cervical disc disease typically involves removing the disc that is pinching the nerve or pressing on the spinal cord. Depending on where the disc is located, the surgeon can remove it through a small incision either in the front (anterior discectomy) or back (posterior discectomy) of the neck during anesthesia.

To close the space that’s left when the disc is removed and restore the spine to its original height, patients have two options:

- Artificial cervical disc replacement
- Cervical fusion

Not everyone is a candidate for the artificial disc, however. Those with osteoporosis, joint disease, infection, inflammation at the site or an allergy to stainless steel shouldn’t have disc replacement surgery.

With cervical fusion surgery, the surgeon removes the damaged disc and places a bone graft in the space between the vertebrae. The bone graft will eventually fuse to the vertebrae above and below it. A metal plate may be screwed into the vertebrae above and below the graft to hold the bone in place, while it heals and fuses with the vertebrae.

The artificial cervical disc replacement procedure has been available in Europe for more than 10 years and has been FDA-approved in the United States for the past five. “The artificial disc, made of stainless steel, is like a ball in socket,” Dr. Gill explains. Surgery is FDA-approved for those 25 to 65 years of age.

In a study of 541 patients, the artificial disc improved neck and arm pain as safely and effectively as cervical fusion, but it preserved greater range of motion. People who get an artificial disc can always opt for cervical fusion later, but if a patient has cervical fusion first, it’s not possible to later put an artificial disc in the same spot.

For more information on cervical disc replacement, call Village Orthopaedic Surgery at 864-530-BONE (2663), or visit [villageorthopaedics.com](http://villageorthopaedics.com).



**Sanjitpal “Sonny” Gill, M.D.** is an orthopaedic surgeon who specializes in complex and minimally invasive spine surgery of the neck and back including athletic injuries of the spine. To make an appointment, please call Village Orthopaedic Surgery at 864-530-BONE (2663).



VILLAGE HOSPITAL

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## Featured Events

As part of our commitment to keeping you healthy, active and informed, the Village Hospital offers a wide selection of health education classes, seminars and events. Register today at [villageatpelham.com](http://villageatpelham.com) or call 864-849-9470. Programs are held in the Village Hospital Community Center (located within the Medical Office Building), unless otherwise noted.

### DIABETES SELF-MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

Wednesday, June 15 • 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Wednesday, July 20 • 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Community Center, Medical Office Building

Diabetes affects every organ in your body, so that means learning as much as you can about how to control it. Join Carolina's Center for Diabetes and Endocrinology to gain the skills you need to accomplish this. You must have a physician referral to participate, and insurance will be filed for program cost. Participants receive a free blood glucose meter and diabetes reference book. Please contact Erica Moore at 864-560-6465 for more information and to register.

### NICOTINE ANONYMOUS

Tuesdays, through July • 6 p.m.

Practice Conference Room, Medical Office Building

Nicotine Anonymous is a weekly support group dedicated to those who have a desire to stop using nicotine. This casual meeting is free and open to the public. No pre-registration is required. Please contact the Joe R. Utley Heart Resource Center at 864-560-4472 for more information.

### PICTURE THIS: MRI'S WITH YOUR COMFORT IN MIND

Thursday, July 21 • 6:30 p.m.

Community Center, Medical Office Building

Learn about our new wide-bore MRI that is more open and more comfortable. This scanner has more open space, which makes a difference for patients with an uneasiness about imaging procedures. It also delivers superior quality images that can lead to a more accurate diagnosis. Join us for a quick info session and tour of our updated MRI, CT and nuclear medicine capabilities. Please register online. Light refreshments served. Free

Save  
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**Stop by the Dogwood Café**

Join us at the beautiful, full-service Dogwood Café and save 10 percent with this coupon. Managed by an experienced restaurateur, the Dogwood Café serves breakfast, lunch and dinner, serving both gourmet and made-to-order food items. Conveniently located in the Village Hospital lobby.

  
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Offer good through 2011, one coupon per diner.

## Community Health Talk

Toni Conner, R.N.

community resource nurse,  
the Village Hospital



Do you remember the old Nat King Cole song, "Roll Out Those Lazy, Hazy, Crazy Days of Summer"? As a child, that song was a staple at my house, and it says it all for me — summer is here, and we are glad! This is the time of year when we are more laid back and relaxed. The days are long, and there are many fun activities.

One of my favorite things about summer is the fresh fruits and vegetables that are so plentiful. This makes summer a wonderful time to develop more healthy eating habits. Experts recommend we all have at least five servings of fruits and vegetables each day. We can benefit from eating fresh fruits and vegetables because they are a natural source of energy and great sources of many vitamins and minerals that help protect us from chronic diseases. Healthy eating is an important part of developing a healthier lifestyle, and it is easy to do, especially at this time of year.

Another great health benefit of summer is that we can be more active during the long days. Children need to be active for at least an hour a day, and adults should aim for about 30 minutes of activity on most days. More activity will benefit your health in a multitude of ways.

This summer I encourage you to work on eating healthier and exercising more. In the last newsletter, I told you that I have started working with a personal trainer to help me reach my health goals. I am doing well with that, and I can personally attest that eating healthier and exercising more does indeed make you feel better and gives you more energy. So give it a try and, like the song says, "you'll wish that summer will always be here." Enjoy!