



It is important to understand that spine surgery may get rid of some of your pain, but may not completely relieve all of your symptoms. Talk with your doctor about what surgery can and cannot do for your problem.



## BACK PAIN CENTER

Gwinnett Medical Center

678-312-2002

[gwinnettmedicalcenter.org/backpain](http://gwinnettmedicalcenter.org/backpain)

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## Understanding Spine Surgery

If you are considering spine surgery, learn as much as you can ahead of time. The more you know, the better choice you will make.



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## How Surgery Can Help

If nonsurgical treatment does not relieve your back or neck problems, your doctor may recommend surgery. Spine surgery can help:

- Relieve pain that runs down your arm or leg.
- Treat problems like leg or arm weakness.
- Keep spine problems from getting worse.

## Common Types of Spine Surgery

### ■ Laminectomy

A **laminectomy** removes the **lamina** (small portion of bone that covers your spinal canal). This opens up your spinal canal to relieve pressure on the spinal cord or nerves. This pressure can cause pain, weakness or numbness that runs down your arms or legs. Laminectomy surgery may also include removing bone spurs or part of a disc pressing on a nerve.

### ■ Laminotomy

A **laminotomy** removes part of the **lamina** (small portion of bone that covers your spinal canal). The surgeon creates a small opening to relieve pressure on a pinched nerve. Laminotomy surgery may also include removing a bone spur or part of a disc pressing on a nerve.

### ■ Discectomy

A **discectomy** removes the damaged portion of a **herniated disc** (some of the soft center of the disc leaks out through a crack in the tougher, outer layer). This can irritate or press on nerves and cause pain, numbness or weakness. These symptoms can affect your neck or back and may run down your arms or legs.

### ■ Disc Replacement

**Disc replacement** surgery replaces a worn or damaged disc with an artificial disc made of metal or plastic. The artificial disc acts as a cushion absorbing bumps and shocks and reducing pain while allowing the spine to bend and move.

### ■ Fusion

**Spinal fusion** locks two or more vertebrae together, making the spine more stable. The fusion keeps the bones from shifting and pressing on nerves. This helps to ease back or neck pain and other symptoms that may run down your arms and hands or legs and feet.



In some cases, your doctor may recommend a combination of these procedures.