

# Spinal Surgeries

Two advances  
that are changing lives

Orthopaedic surgeon  
Dr. Gerald Alexander



## New technology: Disk replacement

According to Dr. Gerald Alexander of the Fullerton Orthopaedic, a major advancement has recently been made in spinal surgery that could change the lives of over 700,000 people in the US who are currently afflicted with vertebral compression fractures.

Compression fractures of the spine are caused when weakened vertebrae crack under pressure due to osteoporosis or injury and up until just recently there was very little anyone could do about it.

Vertebral fractures, which are even more common than broken or fractured hips, cause tremendous pain in the afflicted person often leaving them bedridden until the fracture heals ultimately leaving them with a hunched back. One notable figure with this disorder

## New disc replacement technology has made spinal fusion nearly a thing of the past

was the previous Pope who was visibly bent over when he was seen walking and needed a cane to support himself. Each time a vertebrae fractures the spine bends a little more causing more and more hunching, pain, limited mobility and the



## Old technology: Spinal Fusion

need for canes and walkers.

Now there is a simple half hour procedure where a small balloon, called a KyphX is inserted into the fractured vertebrae and inflated to create a space that is filled with fast setting surgical

cement which strengthens the vertebrae. "The results are amazing, our patients typically feel better immediately after the surgery and it only gets better from there," says Dr. Alexander.

A second major advancement was

recently approved by the FDA for people suffering from slipped or ruptured discs. In the past the only option, if chiropractic and physical therapy were unable to help, was a major surgery where vertebrae were fused together by attaching a metal brace directly to the vertebrae. This was effective in relieving the pain but took a long time to heal and reduced mobility in the spine. A fused spine also placed additional stress on the vertebrae above the fused areas leading to premature deterioration of those upper vertebrae ultimately requiring more surgeries and more fused vertebrae up the spinal column.

Now, instead of accessing the spine through the patients back, spine surgeons are able to make small incisions in the front near the stomach and by simply working around the internal organs, surgeons have clear access to the damaged spinal disc. This allows them to remove the bad disc and replace it with a new artificial disc. The results are a much quicker recovery, full flexibility of the spinal column, no additional stress placed on the other discs in the spine and no need for future spinal surgeries.

"It's an exciting and rapidly changing field," says Dr. Alexander, referring to spine surgery, "and there are many new advances right around the corner. We all get tremendous satisfaction seeing our patients get back their quality of their life."

Both procedures can be found on the website below by clicking the New Technology button.

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