

Patient Testimonial



After having the XLIF procedure, Donald is back to playing golf again

Donald, XLIF® Patient

Donald, a 79-year-old plastics industry retiree, suffered from extreme pain in his right buttock and thigh for about six months. Finally, the pain became unbearable and he opted to undergo a traditional fusion surgery (level L4-5) in 2006. Unfortunately, less than one year later, the pain returned.

Donald's pain was so severe that it prohibited him from walking more than a few steps at a time, thus preventing him from enjoying his favorite activity, golf. He underwent several subsequent procedures, including nerve blocks and radiofrequency (RF) treatment, which provided only temporarily relief. When these treatment options failed, Donald consulted Dr. Russell Nelson, an orthopedic spine surgeon at the Nelson Spine Institute in Thousand Oaks, California.

Upon examining Donald's X-rays, Dr. Nelson identified degeneration of the disc above the level of Donald's prior fusion. Due to the failure of the previous traditional fusion surgery to relieve his pain, and the new slippage of the above disc, Dr. Nelson recommended that Donald consider having an XLIF (eXtreme Lateral Interbody Fusion) procedure. He was confident that it would alleviate Donald's pain. "[Dr. Nelson] explained the minimally disruptive lateral approach procedure and its benefits, including a faster recovery than my previous surgery," Donald recalls.

Unlike typical spine surgery approaches, the XLIF procedure, developed by NuVasive®, accesses the spine laterally, through the patient's side. This minimally disruptive approach avoids disrupting major muscles, tissues, and organs that may otherwise be affected during traditional spine surgery. The XLIF procedure merely requires two one-inch incisions, unlike the typical five-inch incision necessary with traditional open back surgery.

After Dr. Nelson performed the XLIF procedure, Donald's chronic pain was eliminated immediately. His only post operative pain was the general ache of having undergone surgery.

The day after having the XLIF procedure, Donald was walking. He even drove himself home after his two-day stay in the hospital. Once he returned home, Donald was able to climb stairs and apply his own brace (a typical post operative prescription) as needed throughout his recovery period. Today, Donald has not only regained his mobility, but he is also playing golf again, an activity that he has not been able to do for over a year.

"I would tell anyone considering back surgery to explore this minimally disruptive procedure," says Donald. "I have found that many people, including surgeons, are still unaware of the extraordinary outcomes from the XLIF procedure, and I think the word needs to be spread."

As with any spine surgery, there are potential benefits and possible risks associated with the XLIF procedure. It is important that you discuss the potential risks, complications, and benefits of XLIF with your doctor prior to receiving treatment, and that you rely on your physician's judgment. Only your doctor can determine whether you are a suitable candidate for this treatment. You can find a surgeon in your area who performs the XLIF procedure by utilizing the Physician Locator on www.lateralaccess.org.