

Minimally Invasive Spine Surgery Offers Faster Recovery than Traditional Open Surgery

by Ruben Torrealba, MD

Do you have pain in the low back that shoots into your legs? Do you have sciatica?

If your pain has not gotten better over time with conservative treatment, you may benefit from minimally invasive spine surgery (MISS). MISS is a less invasive type of surgery – in comparison to the traditional open type of surgery – in which the surgeon performs surgery on the spine through a much smaller incision using new, advanced technology.



Start with conservative treatment

Your doctor's first step, when you come to the office with these symptoms, is to perform a physical exam and order imaging studies. If these show evidence of spinal disease, he or she will likely begin by treating your condition nonsurgically. Conservative treatments include medications, physical therapy and epidural injections. If these are unsuccessful in relieving your pain, your doctor may recommend surgery.

Types of surgery

In traditional open spine surgery, the surgeon makes an incision on the back and retracts the muscles to fully visualize and gain access to the spine. In MISS, the surgeon tunnels via a small tube through the muscle to the spine. With the use of special x-ray machines and computerized navigation, the surgeon is able to perform surgery through this small incision.

In both types of surgeries, the objective is the same – to relieve pressure on the nerves and/or to stabilize the spine. Nerves are most often compressed by bone spurs or a herniated disc. MISS allows the surgeon to remove these painful causes of nerve compression. If the spine is also unstable, the surgeon can additionally perform a fusion, using screws and rods, through this same small incision.

Benefits of MISS

Because this surgery is less invasive and is performed through a smaller incision than is required in open surgery, patients typically have:

- Less damage to muscle tissue.
- Less blood loss during surgery.
- Shorter hospital stay.
- Less post-operative pain and a shorter recovery time, allowing you to get back to your regular daily activities faster.

Why MISS?

If you have low back pain radiating into the legs that has not responded to conservative treatments, talk to your doctor about treatment options, including minimally invasive spine surgery. For more information, call our office at **336-333-6306** or visit our website at www.TriadSpine.com. Click on "Surgical Procedures" in our Knowledge Center for more information on MISS.

Ruben Torrealba, MD, treats simple and complex spinal disorders. He specializes in minimally invasive spine surgery (MISS). A native of Puerto Rico, Dr. Torrealba earned his medical degree and completed his residency in orthopaedics at the University of Puerto Rico. He went on to complete a fellowship in spine surgery at the prestigious Twin Cities Spine Center in Minneapolis, where he learned the latest MISS techniques. Dr. Torrealba is fluent in both Spanish and English.



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MISS Procedures

MISS Discectomy

In this procedure, an x-ray machine is used to localize the affected area and tubular retractors provide access to the spine. The surgeon removes part of the bone of the spinal lamina to gain access to the nerves and herniated disc. The surgeon then can remove the part of the disc causing compression. The incision is approximately 2 centimeters in length.

MISS Decompression

The goal in this procedure is to remove the bone spurs and overgrown ligament that are compressing the nerves in the spine. It is performed by making an incision guided by the x-ray machine. The surgeon uses tubular retractors to gain access to the spine. Then the surgeon removes part of the lamina and facet joints that are causing nerve compression. Both sides of the spine can be decompressed through only one incision that measures approximately 2 to 4 centimeters.

MISS Fusion

This procedure can be performed for the same reasons as a traditional open lumbar fusion. The main differences between MISS and open surgery are the length of the incisions and the amount of muscle that is cut in order to visualize the spine. In open surgery, a long midline incision is made in the back, cutting through the muscles. In MISS, two small incisions are made on each side of the back. Instead of cutting through muscle, the surgeon uses tubular retractors to make a tunnel to the spine. This allows the surgeon to relieve pressure on the nerves, remove the herniated disc, and stabilize the spine with implants – all through the same small incisions! Computer navigation can be used during this procedure for even more precision.

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