



Andrew M Cash Orthopedic Spine Surgeon State of the Art Non-Operative & Operative Treatments of the Neck & Back



TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL SURGICAL OUTCOME

By Andrew M. Cash, M.D.

Know Your Options

Your surgeon should identify the source of your complaints.

- Adults often have multiple MRI findings that are not causing pain,
- Identify which of the findings, if any, are generating pain in your spine.
- Patient complaints and examination findings must be used in conjunction with imaging findings to the patient's pain. Many disc bulges cause pain and some do not.

- To simply operate on a disc bulge could lead to unnecessary surgeries possibly with poor outcomes.

Surgical outcomes are improved by identifying the correct problem, performing the best procedure for that problem, and performing that surgery well.

- After history and physical examination are performed, surgeons will order x-rays, MRIs, CT scans, nerve studies, diagnostic injections, and discograms.

Your surgeon should have a comprehensive complement of diagnostic testing to corroborate clinical diagnoses. Although there are no guarantees with surgery, identifying the pain generator will improve the likelihood of success.

Know Your Surgeon

Surgical qualifications are variable. Find out if your surgeon:

- Is board-certified, independent from state medical licensure.
- Is fellowship trained, provides high-level specialization, often provides better outcomes and lowered complications.

- What percentage of their practice is related to spine surgery as opposed to general orthopedics or neurosurgery.

Know Your Procedures

Knowing everything you can about your surgeon is as important as doing your homework about the types of procedures available.

- Minimally invasive surgeries often improve surgical success, lower complications, limit hospital stays, reduce blood loss, reduce infections, improve speed of recovery.
- Ask how many minimally invasive surgeries their surgeon has performed and if they've trained other surgeons.

Know Your Options

Once surgery is performed, there is no undoing the surgery.

- Patients may want to pursue second and even third opinions
- Make sure you feel comfortable with your spine surgeon as your compassionate physician and as your surgical technician.

The source of the pain should be uncovered before surgery. Although surgery may reveal things undetected by diagnostics, performing surgery for the basis for learning the source of pain is not optimal.

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Know About Elective Spine Surgery

Elective spine surgery is rarely curative. Often, patients might experience incomplete relief, or future pain may result in the same area due to adjacent level stresses and eventual breakdown of spinal structures. Understand expectations accurately so you know what you are signing up for.

- Elective spine surgery generally follows conservative measures like physical therapy, chiropractic, medication management and therapeutic injections.
- Allow a sufficient amount of time to see if conservative measures work for you. Elective surgery is generally held as a last resort.

Ask your surgeon to explain why surgery is a reasonable option and provide any non-surgical options.

Know When You Feel Good About Your Decision

Your surgeon should be able to tell you that he /she would recommend your surgery for his/her family members for the same condition. When your surgeon recommends a particular procedure, ask if there are different approaches and if there are variable surgical techniques to "get the job done."

Andrew M Cash, MD is a board-certified and fellowship-trained orthopedic spine surgeon who began practice in Las Vegas in 2006. Dr. Cash is the founder and director of the Desert Institute of Spine Care and the Minimally Invasive Center of Excellence (MICOE). He studied under Dr. Robert Watkins, a world-renowned spine surgeon who operated on countless professional, collegiate and Olympic athletes. Prior to his Spine Fellowship, Dr. Cash completed a five-year orthopedic surgery residency at the Atlanta Medical Center and received his medical degree from the prestigious University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.