

# Neck Surgery

When do you need surgery?



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Most of us experience neck pain from time to time; you may be achy and stiff after a stressful day at work, or you may wake up in the morning and discover that you can barely turn your head after sleeping in an awkward position. Neck pain may be caused by poor posture, remaining in one position for too long, carrying a heavy bag over one shoulder, or using your shoulder to cradle a phone; everyday stress can also cause temporary aches and pains.

This discomfort can usually be relieved by simple measures such as massage, a hot bath, or a couple of over-the-counter pain medications. While you may feel uncomfortable for a day or so, the pain typically goes away on its own, and there is usually no other treatment necessary.

However, if you have chronic neck pain – soreness or discomfort that lasts for more than a few weeks – there may be an underlying problem, and it is important to have it checked out by an experienced physician. Chronic neck pain can be caused by a variety of factors; let's take a look at some of the more common conditions associated with neck pain.

## Cervical Foraminal Stenosis

If you have neck pain that occurs mainly when you hold your neck in a certain position or after a particular activity, you may have cervical foraminal stenosis. This condition is typically the result of aging or natural wear on the spine that can cause a pinched nerve. Medical intervention is usually necessary and may

range from limiting certain activities to pain medication to surgery.

## Cervical Degenerative Disc Disease

Virtually everyone experiences some degree of degeneration of the spinal discs, which can lead to nerve irritation or pinching and cause stiffness of the neck. If you have neck pain that lasts for several months and fluctuates in intensity, you may be experiencing cervical degenerative disc disease. Initially, your doctor may recommend icing, heat, or the use of anti-inflammatory medications to relieve the pain; a more aggressive approach may be necessary for pain that does not respond to these treatments.

## Cervical Spinal Stenosis

Patients who experience neck pain that radiates down the arms, combined with lack of coordination in the arms and legs; sudden, shooting pain; or difficulties with fine motor skills, may have a condition known as cervical spinal stenosis. The underlying cause of this condition is typically a herniated (compressed)

cervical disc; surgery is often the best option for treatment.

If you have neck pain that does not go away after several weeks, it is important that you do not put off seeking treatment from a qualified neurosurgeon; treating the underlying problem as soon as possible is the best way to prevent further injury to the spine and ensure a full recovery.

My recommendation for a neurosurgeon specializing in cervical spinal surgery in Orange County is Dr. Frank Coufal of OC Medical Group in Anaheim.

Dr. Coufal has been featured on Oprah, The Discovery Channel, The 700 Club, and is a published, well respected, and recognized researcher in spine surgery.

Beside his extensive list of achievements, Dr. Frank Coufal's patients also love him because he is personable, extremely detailed, comprehensive and conservative in his treatment approach, and always has his patient's best interest at heart.

**Dr. Frank Coufal specializes in neurosurgery. He graduated from Stanford University and received his medical degree from the University of Texas. He also completed his clinical neurosurgery residency at the University of California, San Diego Medical Center.**

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