

[IMAGE]

Think Twice before Going under the Knife

Surgeons perform thousands of procedures each year in hospitals all across the country. In many instances, surgery may be the only option to save one's life -- but is it always necessary? With recent reports of the alarming (and increasing) percentage of adverse events associated with surgical procedures, you may want to think twice before going under the knife.

Case in point: a study in *Spine* that compared conservative care vs. surgery for the treatment of a specific type of spinal fracture (called a "burst fracture"). Eighty patients with a diagnosed burst fracture were randomly assigned to one of two groups. Patients in the nonoperative group wore a back brace for three months (at all times except when bathing) and stayed in hospital beds until their pain was "controlled." After three months, patients were allowed activities of daily living and light sedentary work. Patients in the operative group underwent surgery ("posterior fixation") and were evaluated two years later.

Results showed limited differences between the two groups in terms of long-term pain relief and improvement of overall function. The study authors also point out that surgery cost four times as much as conservative care, and recommend early activity "to the point of pain tolerance." If you or someone you know is considering surgery for back pain or other musculoskeletal problems, investigate the value of nonsurgical, conservative care by scheduling a consultation with your local doctor of chiropractic.

Reference:

Shen W, Liu T, Shen Y. Nonoperative treatment versus posterior fixation for thoracolumbar junction burst fractures without neurologic deficit. *Spine* 2001: Vol. 26, No. 9, pp1038-45.

For additional information on back pain, go to <http://www.chiroweb.com/tyh/backpain.html>.

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