





# From Back Pain to Pain Free



## Treating low back pain with a minimally invasive procedure

**M**ost people experience low back pain at some point, often the result of an acute condition such as a strained muscle or herniated disc. But many people suffer with chronic low back pain, which can affect both mobility and the ability to enjoy life. The risk of developing a lower back problem increases as we age.

### **A Debilitating Condition**

One common cause of chronic low back pain is spinal stenosis, which is a narrowing of the canal within the spinal column that houses and protects the spinal nerves. As the space available in the spine gets smaller,

the nerves are compressed, causing severe low back pain, numbness, or weakness in the legs. Spinal stenosis is usually caused by arthritis or spinal injury. The American Association of Neurological Surgeons estimates that 400,000 Americans are currently living with the pain and numbness of lumbar (low back) spinal stenosis.

Although spinal stenosis can be treated surgically, patients are sometimes deterred by the thought of a painful and prolonged recovery. The good news is, lumbar spinal stenosis can be treated at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center with minimal downtime.

Minimally Invasive Spine Surgery Neurosurgeon Jean-Marc Voyadzis, MD, treats spinal stenosis using minimally invasive laminectomy. While traditional spinal surgery necessitates cutting through layers of tissue and muscle, a laminectomy is a procedure that leaves the patient's back muscles largely intact. Because the muscles are undisturbed, patients recover much more easily and can get back to their daily activities more quickly.

With the patient lying face down and under general anesthesia, Dr. Voyadzis uses a series of tubular dilators to expose the patient's spine without damaging the



Jean-Marc Voyadzis, MD, a neurosurgeon at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center and Assistant Professor, Department of Neurosurgery at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital

# Like the Pain Never Even Happened

From debilitating pain to free movement—Ed Taylor is living proof of minimally invasive spine surgery's possibilities.

Mowing the lawn, walking for more than a few steps, standing—these are all things Ed could not do because of severe pain in the backs of his legs. The 76-year-old La Plata resident had been coping with limited mobility for five years. Although he had heard that back surgery necessitated a long and difficult recovery, Ed knew something had to be done.

Ed was suffering from spinal stenosis, the narrowing of the spine's bony canal. When the canal narrows, it squeezes the nerves inside, causing symptoms including back and leg pain, which can be debilitating, as well as leg weakness and numbness.

Imagine Ed's relief when he learned that neurosurgeon Jean-Marc Voyadzis, MD, could treat this disease at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center using minimally invasive techniques and an incision the size of a dime. "It seemed like a miracle to me," Ed said.

"A number of recent studies have shown that this approach decreases blood loss and post-operative pain, allowing a quick recovery and faster return to work," Dr. Voyadzis said.

Ed can attest to that: his surgery took one hour, and he went home later that day.



Minimally spine surgery patient Ed Taylor

surrounding muscles. Using an operative microscope and specialized surgical instruments, Dr. Voyadzis removes the bony overgrowth and thickened ligaments that have been compressing the patient's spinal nerves and causing the symptoms.

The procedure takes about an hour. After recovering from anesthesia, patients typically report an immediate reduction in pain and generally go home the same day.

*For more information on exciting developments in minimally invasive spine surgery, visit us on the Web at [MedstarSouthernMaryland.org](http://MedstarSouthernMaryland.org).*

"I felt a difference right away," he said. He was up and walking without pain the following day and could resume his normal daily activities immediately. "I didn't even have much discomfort from the surgery itself."

Today, Ed Taylor is back to an active life.

"It's just as if I never had any back or leg problems at all," he said.

*For more information or to schedule an appointment with Dr. Voyadzis, please call **301-856-2323**.*