



Netcare Waterfall
City Hospital



DISCOVER THE REAL TRUTH BEHIND SPINE SURGERIES

By Dr Jaytesh Pillay, Orthopaedic & Spine Surgeon at Waterfall, Netcare Waterfall City Hospital



Many people have been told to 'never have spine surgery', however in the hands of a trained spinal specialist, this is far from the truth.

So, your doctor has recommended spine surgery - what does that mean? Many people subscribe to the antiquated thought that spine surgeries are accompanied by long recovery times and pain after surgery. This is no longer true.

In this article, we cover some of the misconceptions about spine surgery and discover more modern, advanced techniques.

WHAT ARE THE MISCONCEPTIONS?

- Spine surgery always fails.
- One spine surgery always leads to another.
- You should never have spine surgery.
- The chances of complications and paralysis are high in spine surgeries.
- You have to rest in bed for 6 weeks after a spine surgery.

These misconceptions often arise from anecdotal accounts from family and friends, stereotypes and unindicated surgery leading to unintended complications.

WHAT IS THE REALITY?

- Spine surgery can be very successful.
- Surgery is often life changing - improving a patient's quality of life.
- Modern surgical techniques and state-of-the-art technology make spine surgery safe and effective.

- This also means there is less pain and faster recovery times.
- Patients are made to move immediately after surgery, eliminating debilitating bed rest.
- Multidisciplinary teams work together to ensure successful outcomes.

Modern Surgical Techniques

The era of modern spine surgery began in the last 15 - 20 years and the technology has changed the way doctors perform surgeries.

Some examples of modern techniques include:

Minimally Invasive Techniques

These techniques involve doing spine surgery with smaller incisions, thereby reducing damage to muscles and surrounding tissue, and reducing pain and infections, leading to a shorter hospital stay and faster recovery.

Endoscopic Spinal Surgery

In this procedure, the surgeon makes small incisions, approximately 1cm, and performs spine surgery using a tiny camera. This means surgery can be performed safely with less pain and faster recovery.

At Netcare Waterfall City Hospital we recently performed an Endoscopic Spine Surgery, the first of its kind at Netcare, using a camera and making an incision of only 1cm.



Robotics and Navigation

This refers to the use of special machines that allow the surgeon to accurately and safely insert spinal instrumentation into the vertebra, thus lowering the risk of damage to the spinal cord and surrounding tissue.

Neuromonitoring

Special monitors are used during these surgeries to assess spine and nerve activity which makes surgeries safer and prevents injury to nerves and the spinal cord.

Spinal Instrumentation

Modern spinal instruments are stronger, smaller, have lower profiles and are made of materials that allow faster and safer integration. There are also more options such as cervical disc replacements, which avoid a fusion and are motion-sparing.

SHOULD I HAVE SPINE SURGERY?

Despite all these modern techniques and the available technologies, spine surgery should only be performed when all other conservative or non-operative measures have been exhausted. However, spine surgery, when done for the right reasons in the proper fashion, can yield excellent results.

Netcare Waterfall City Hospital has a fully integrated Multidisciplinary Spinal Team - Spine at Waterfall

Our team involves an Orthopaedic spine surgeon, a Physiotherapist, a Biokineticist, a Dietician and a Psychologist. Each member of the team has a special interest or further training in the management of spine conditions. We use a patient-based approach combined with shared protocols to ensure each patient is comprehensively assessed and treated. A team approach also means no unnecessary surgeries and true surgical cases are correctly identified, worked up and prepared. We also ensure team-based post-operative care.