

# SeniorHealth

INSIDE: SeniorHealth

QUARTERLY NEWS FOR SENIORS

[www.ucihealth.com/seniors](http://www.ucihealth.com/seniors)

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## TREATMENT EASES PAIN OF SLIPPED DISCS

Patients with slipped discs in the spine fare significantly better with surgery as a treatment rather than conservative nonsurgical therapy, according to a recent New England Journal of Medicine study.

UC Irvine Healthcare spine specialists offer several minimally invasive options for this condition that occurs as the joints in the spine wear out with age. Known as degenerative spondylolisthesis, the condition causes sciatica, or severe pain in the low back that radiates down the back of the legs.

"We open space for the nerves and stabilize the spine," says Dr. Nitin Bhatia, UC Irvine Comprehensive Spine Program co-director. Adds co-director Dr. Burak Ozgur, "Patients usually wake up and their sciatica pain is gone."

**For an appointment, please call 714.456.BACK**



## Relief for Your Aching Back

**Do you need back surgery but worry that it is too risky at your age? No problem, say Drs. Burak Ozgur and Nitin Bhatia, co-directors of the University of California, Irvine Healthcare Comprehensive Spine Program.**

"Age doesn't rule out surgery, only health factors do," says Ozgur, a neurosurgeon. "The common perception is that seniors are too old or sick to undergo spine surgery. But so much has changed in recent years to improve outcomes and reduce risks."

"Earlier this year, we performed surgery on a 94-year-old patient. He had no problems and his pain is gone," adds Bhatia, an orthopedic surgeon. He recently operated successfully on an 82-year-old, an 84-year-old and an 88-year-old in the same week.

The risk of pain from degenerative disease of the spine increases with age, according to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. The most common conditions affecting the back among older adults seen by UC Irvine Healthcare spine specialists are:

- osteoporosis-related compression fractures;
- lumbar stenosis, in which the spinal column narrows and presses on the nerves in the spinal cord; and
- adult degenerative diseases of the spine such as scoliosis (curvature) and spondylolisthesis (slipped vertebrae).

The majority of back pain cases are treated without surgery. When surgery is necessary for more severe back problems, UC Irvine Healthcare doctors achieve a high rate of success with the most advanced surgical techniques, giving patients the best chance for pain-free living.

## Assisted Living: When Independence Wanes

Older adults enjoy varying levels of independence in their daily living. While some might be active and self-sufficient, others might require around-the-clock care. Geriatricians with University of California, Irvine Healthcare know the right service for each person's level of independence.

"Everyone has different needs, preferences and finances," says Dr. Chinh Le, a UC Irvine geriatrician. "If you start needing help, figure out exactly what you need. Ask yourself, your family members and your doctor."

Generally, a person should seek assisted living or long-term care when needing help to cook, eat, dress or take medication. If the senior is able to continue living at home, assistance may be arranged through meal delivery programs, transportation services or hired aides to help with dressing, bathing, cooking and cleaning.

If the person is not able to live at home, there are several residential options, depending on the level of care needed:

- **Board-and-care** — Usually a house in which 8 to 10 people live to receive assistance with daily tasks and medications.
- **Assisted living** — A facility for up to 100 people with nursing health care supervision.
- **Skilled nursing facility** — Either a hospital-like setting or a home-like facility, with staff on site 24 hours a day to provide skilled nursing and medical care.

UC Irvine Healthcare offers a home visit program in which geriatricians make "house calls" to seniors' homes and assisted-living facilities to care for certain medical needs.

The Office on Aging of Orange County at 714.567.7500 or 800.510.2020 can provide helpful information about long-term care.

Choosing a facility should involve careful consideration. "Don't wait until there is a crisis," Le says. "Develop a plan now."

**To make an appointment with a UC Irvine Healthcare geriatrician, call toll free 866.456.7007.**

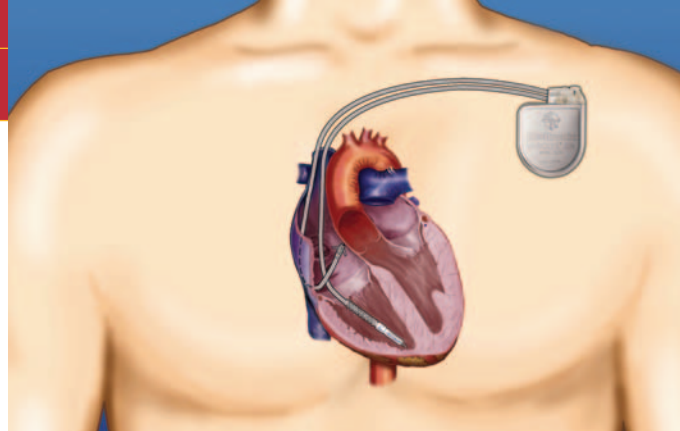


Illustration courtesy of Medtronic

*An ICD is implanted in the upper chest, with leads precisely placed into the heart, to monitor the heartbeat and deliver therapy when dangerous rhythms occur.*

## A Healthy Jolt: Implanted Heart Devices Save Lives

Studies show that nothing is better at preventing cardiac arrest for certain at-risk people than a small, internal device called an implantable cardioverter defibrillator, or ICD. "It's like having a guardian angel in your chest at all times," says Dr. Subramaniam Krishnan, a University of California, Irvine Healthcare cardiologist who specializes in electrophysiology.

ICDs and implantable pacemakers are designed to restore a proper heartbeat for patients with various forms of arrhythmia, or abnormal heartbeats. Such conditions can prevent the heart from pumping enough blood to the body, which can lead to fainting spells, falls and damage to organs such as the brain and heart.

For bradyarrhythmias, or slow heartbeats, a pacemaker delivers small electrical impulses to ensure a more normal rhythm. Pacemakers are so advanced they automatically adjust, stimulating a faster rate during exercise and a slower rate during sleep.

ICDs treat dangerous, rapid heartbeats such ventricular fibrillation (V-fib) and ventricular tachycardia. ICDs detect rhythm abnormalities and deliver a small jolt to shock the heart back into normal rhythm. A person will lose consciousness within seconds and die within minutes if not treated for a V-fib episode.

Pacemakers and ICDs can be affected by strong electric or magnetic fields. Patients should avoid high-voltage electrical cables and MRI imaging equipment. Krishnan advises patients with implantable devices to carry ID cards and check with their doctors for any questions of exposure.

"Most of the ICDs we implant now are for prophylaxis against sudden cardiac death," Krishnan says. "These are lifesaving technologies."

**To learn about a support group for people with pacemakers and ICDs, call 714.456.5984. To make an appointment with a UC Irvine cardiologist, call 714.456.6699.**

# FREE SEMINARS

## AGING BRILLIANTLY

**Kerry Burnight, PhD**

UC Irvine gerontologist

UC Irvine SeniorHealth Center

**Wednesday, Aug. 15 ■ 1 p.m.**

Oasis Senior Center

800 Marguerite Ave., Corona del Mar

## A JOINT EFFORT:

### HIP REPLACEMENT SURGERY

**Marianne Lovejoy, RN**

UC Irvine Joint Replacement Program

**Wednesday, Aug. 22 ■ 11 a.m.**

Tustin Area Senior Center

200 South C St., Tustin

## MACULAR DEGENERATION

**Dr. Baruch Kuppermann**

UC Irvine ophthalmologist

Two presentations

**Thursday, Aug. 23 ■ 10 a.m.**

Lakeview Senior Center

20 Lake Road, Irvine

**Thursday, Aug. 30 ■ 10:30 a.m.**

Richard Nixon Library & Birthplace

18001 Yorba Linda Blvd., Yorba Linda

## PROSTATE CANCER UPDATE: FROM EARLY DETECTION TO ROBOTIC SURGERY

**Dr. David Ornstein**

UC Irvine urologist

**Friday, Sept. 14 ■ 1 p.m.**

Oasis Senior Center

800 Marguerite Ave.

Corona del Mar

## GERD: GASTROESOPHAGEAL REFLUX DISEASE

**Dr. V. Raman Muthusamy**

UC Irvine gastroenterologist

H. H. Chao Comprehensive Digestive

Disease Center

**Tuesday, Sept. 18 ■ 1 p.m.**

Florence Sylvester Senior Center

23721 Moulton Parkway

Laguna Hills

## OSTEOPOROSIS

**Dr. Simin Torabzadeh**

UC Irvine geriatrician

**Wednesday, Sept. 19 ■ 10:30 a.m.**

Merage Jewish Community Center

1 Federation Way, Irvine

## HEARING LOSS: DETECTION, DIAGNOSIS AND INTERVENTION

**Dr. Hamid Djalilian**

UC Irvine otolaryngologist

**Thursday, Sept. 27 ■ 1 p.m.**

Orange Senior Center

170 S. Olive St., Orange

## SKIN CANCER & TREATMENT

**Dr. Kenneth Linden**

UC Irvine dermatologist

**Wednesday, Oct. 17 ■ 10:30 a.m.**

Merage Jewish Community Center

1 Federation Way, Irvine

## SCIATICA: WHAT IS IT AND HOW IS IT TREATED?

**Dr. William Cable**

UC Irvine neurologist

**Wednesday, Oct. 24 ■ 11 a.m.**

Tustin Area Senior Center

200 South C St., Tustin

## STROKE PREVENTION

**Dr. Steven C. Cramer**

UC Irvine neurologist

**Thursday, Oct. 25 ■ 1 p.m.**

Orange Senior Center

170 S. Olive St., Orange

## LIVING WELL WITH DIABETES

**Dr. Andrew Reikes**

UC Irvine endocrinologist

**Wednesday, Nov. 7 ■ 10:30 a.m.**

Merage Jewish Community Center

1 Federation Way, Irvine

For more information, visit [www.ucihealth.com/seminars](http://www.ucihealth.com/seminars)  
or call toll free 877.UCI.DOCS (877.824.3627).

## New Hospital Progress on Target

Construction of University of California, Irvine Healthcare's new university hospital is now two-thirds complete. Moreover, the \$372 million project is on time and on budget.

While the seven-story hospital is expected to open in spring 2009, UC Irvine Healthcare doctors and staff already are beginning to plan the complex move of the necessary equipment, supplies and other materials into the new facility while seamlessly continuing patient care.



Digital rendering of new hospital

The new hospital will have 191 beds, the majority of them private, in rooms designed to reduce noise, capture natural light and accommodate family. This is in addition to the existing 102 beds in the medical center's tower and the 84-bed Neuropsychiatric Center.

As Orange County's only academic medical center, the new hospital will support expert patient care, the latest medical technology and research, and the education of doctors. During construction, all inpatient and outpatient care continues uninterrupted.

ONE OF  
THE BEST



University of California, Irvine Medical Center recently was named one of "America's Best Hospitals" in geriatrics — the care of older patients — and in urology. For more information, visit [www.ucihealth.com](http://www.ucihealth.com).

UCIRVINE



## A Day for Seniors

More than 1,600 seniors converged upon the Crystal Cathedral on May 22 for UC Irvine Healthcare's eighth annual conference, **Taking Charge of Your Health Care**. The daylong event was filled with physicians' presentations, exhibits, health screenings, food and giveaways. For more photos, visit [www.ucihealth.com/eventphotos](http://www.ucihealth.com/eventphotos).

## Relief for Your Aching Back (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

"Far too many seniors are suffering with chronic pain when there are minimally invasive procedures that eliminate or reduce pain significantly," Ozgur says.

Minimally invasive surgery such as vertebroplasty and kyphoplasty stabilize the spine and relieve pain caused by osteoporosis-related compression fractures. They usually are completed as outpatient procedures in less than an hour.

For lumbar stenosis, UC Irvine Healthcare doctors can implant a titanium spacer called an X-STOP that helps spread the bones to eliminate pain and improve walking. Surgeons also have minimally invasive approaches to

conventional spinal fusion surgery, such as a technique called extreme lateral interbody fusion (XLIF) to treat degenerative scoliosis. Both procedures help shorten hospital stays and recovery times.

UC Irvine surgeons have expertise in minimally invasive laminectomy and fusion procedures to treat slipped vertebrae. "A lot of doctors do not know about minimally invasive surgical options for spine surgery," Bhatia says. "The rewards of pain-free living are worth exploring these options."

**To make an appointment with a UC Irvine Healthcare spine specialist, please call 714.456.BACK.**