

# SeniorHealth

INSIDE: SeniorHealth

QUARTERLY NEWS FOR SENIORS

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Spine Disorders .....1  
 Cardiac Devices .....2  
 Assisted Living .....2  
 Free Seminars .....3

## 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.

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).

UC IRVINE



## 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.**