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# PAINNEWS

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# SPINAL CORD STIMULATION

## DOES IT REALLY WORK?



### *HEAR SUCCESS STORIES FROM ACTUAL SOUTHWEST SPINE AND PAIN CENTER PATIENTS!*

Since 1967, spinal cord stimulation has been used to treat patients suffering from neuropathic pain. It is often recommended as a “final option” for pain relief when physicians have exhausted all other treatment options. This means, patients who have not experienced pain relief from conservative, alternative, and interventional pain therapies are usually considered candidates for this procedure.

While the spinal cord stimulator has received mixed reviews on its value and efficacy, the pain management specialists at Southwest Spine and Pain Center continue to witness promising results from this implantable device. Spinal cord stimulation has steadily improved over the last five decades, and it will continue to improve as different applications of the technology are studied and developed.

Regardless, patients often wonder if spinal cord stimulation really works. In short, the results of spinal cord stimulation for chronic neuropathic pain vary from patient to patient. For some patients, like Jim Wilbur, the permanent spinal cord stimulator device provided optimal pain relief.

For nearly 30 years, Jim suffered from chronic neck, shoulder, and back pain. He went through several operations, but did not experience sufficient relief. Jim wanted to give up, but after reviewing his case, Dr. Rick O Bray recommended spinal cord stimulation.

“Dr. Rick said, ‘Jim there is nothing that can be done about your back, except spinal cord stimulation, that’s your only choice,’” said Jim Wilbur. “So, they went through the trial run by strapping the stimulator on my back and it worked beautifully for three days. I was in heaven.”

After agreeing to the permanent device, Jim told the SSPC team he didn’t have enough good things to say about the treatment.

“My pain level was a 10+ all the time before I got this treatment,” said Jim. “Now I can go into my shop and make stained glass... I would recommend [Dr. Rick] to anybody.”

Delray Graves, another patient of Southwest Spine and Pain Center, also received a spinal cord stimulator after developing degenerative disc disease from his time as a Marine in the '90-'91 Gulf War. He underwent spinal surgery to reduce his pain symptoms, but when that didn't work, Delray went to Southwest Spine and Pain Center for treatment.

**“I was at Southwest Spine and Pain Center and was recommended the spinal cord stimulator,” said Delray. “The trial went so well, I didn’t want to give it back! Since the stimulator has been implanted, not only can I do more, I feel more active. I feel like a better dad.”**

Results from spinal cord stimulation may vary, but talk to your Southwest Spine and Pain Center physician today to see what this therapy can do for you!

# FAST FACTS ABOUT

## RADIOFREQUENCY ABLATION

### 1 RADIOFREQUENCY ABLATION USES ELECTRICITY

Radiofrequency ablation is a minimally invasive procedure that reduces facet joint pain with the help of electrical currents and heat waves. Through the use of electricity, physicians are able to create heat lesions on damaged nerves to disrupt their ability to send pain signals.

### 2 RADIOFREQUENCY ABLATION CAN PROVIDE MONTHS OF RELIEF

Pain relief may not occur until two to three weeks after the procedure. However, a few days after radiofrequency ablation, patients usually report a gradual decrease in pain with continued improvement for the following weeks. Most patients experience a few months of pain relief, but in some cases, radiofrequency ablation can provide patients with several years of pain relief.

### 3 MOST PATIENTS ARE CANDIDATES FOR THIS THERAPY

If you're interested in radiofrequency ablation, consult your Southwest Spine and Pain Center physician. Patients who suffer from pain and tenderness in the back, difficulty rotating the head, neck pain, headaches, shoulder pain, and stiffness from a chronic condition may be considered a candidate for this procedure. However, a history of ongoing infections or bleeding issues could present complications, so it's best for patients to discuss this procedure with one of the pain management specialists.

### 4 PATIENTS CAN RETURN HOME THE SAME DAY

On the day of the procedure, a mild sedation is administered and a local anesthetic is applied to the area of skin where the radiofrequency needle will be placed. Because general anesthesia is not used during radiofrequency ablation, patients can usually return home about 1 to 3 hours after the procedure or once the sedation wears off.

## Benefits of Radiofrequency Ablation:

- Pain relief for up to 2 years
- Short recovery time
- Greater range of motion
- Low complication and morbidity rates
- Longer lasting pain relief compared to steroid injections

# 4 FIBRO-FRIENDLY WORKOUTS

If you have fibromyalgia, you know exercising with chronic pain, stiffness, and fatigue can be difficult. Still, avoiding exercise and physical activity altogether may do more harm than good. At Southwest Spine and Pain Center, interventional pain treatments are vital for patients living with fibromyalgia and chronic pain. However, conservative and alternative therapies like exercise and eating healthy can also improve a patient's quality of life. Before throwing in the towel, consider these gentle, yet effective workouts for your fibromyalgia pain:

## 01. WALKING

Walking is a great way to loosen up stiff joints, boost blood flow, combat fatigue, and strengthen muscles in the body. A study published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine found that participating in a walking group a few times a week significantly increased a fibromyalgia patient's energy levels, improved their sleep, and boosted their overall health. Other health benefits included a decrease in average blood pressure, resting heart rate, body fat, and total cholesterol.

## 03. STRETCHING

Stretching may not be a "workout" per se, but it is an effective way to help improve your range of motion and ease pain. When you set aside a few minutes each day to stretch, you significantly improve your flexibility and help loosen up painful, fatigued muscles. Combine your stretching routine with a workout, or practice it alone – it's completely up to you! If you're unfamiliar with what muscles to stretch for pain relief, consult your physician at Southwest Spine and Pain Center for guidance.

## 02. YOGA

Practicing a slower, more gentle form of yoga called Hatha yoga can increase your flexibility and help you become more mindful. At least, that's what a study in the Journal of Pain Research found for women with fibromyalgia who participated in a weekly Hatha yoga program. This unique practice focuses on reducing the physical and psychological symptoms of fibromyalgia through postures, breathing exercises, and meditation. Give it a try!

## 04. DAILY ACTIVITIES

This last point may seem a little odd, but participating in normal, daily activities is a form of exercise. Various studies have found vacuuming, dusting, doing laundry, gardening, playing with your kids, etc. all count as physical activity! Just remember to take breaks and switch up your routine if certain parts of your body are aching more than others.

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