



St. Luke's Orthopaedic Services

Get Off Your Back & Back On Your Feet

Do you have back pain? Almost everyone does at one point or another. But is yours debilitating? Does it make it difficult to walk, work, play or perform daily chores? Does it make it impossible just to get out of bed? Have you run the gauntlet of painkillers, injections and anti-inflammatories with no improvement?

A relatively new, minimally invasive procedure called vertebral body replacement (VBR) using a STALIF implant might be just the thing to get you off your back and back on your feet.

According to Steven T. Puccio, DO, a spine surgery expert with St. Luke's Orthopaedic Surgical Group, VBR using the STALIF implant promises less trauma to muscle and soft tissue, less blood loss, a shorter hospital stay and a quicker recovery than traditional open back surgery. "This is not a silver bullet for back pain," says Dr. Puccio, "but it is an excellent option for those with debilitating pain who cannot find relief from traditional means of treatment. It involves making several small incisions in the abdomen and going through the natural split in the muscle there. We implant a very high tech polymer 'cage' in the spinal column to take the place of the problem disk and pack it with bone grafts from the hip to aid in healing. This is then held in place with three titanium screws."

Dr. Puccio was the first surgeon in the U.S. to perform this procedure in 2004 as well as the first to perform it in the Lehigh Valley at St. Luke's back in November 2006. Since that time he has performed several more VBRs here. "This procedure is not for everyone, and it does have some minor side effects," Dr. Puccio says, "but it has been shown to dramatically diminish debilitating pain – it has an excellent success rate."

For more information about vertebral body replacement (VBR) using a STALIF implant, call St. Luke's Orthopaedic Surgical Group at 610-807-9400.