



## The Spinal Column

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March 2009

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### What's New at LSI

#### New Diagnostic Center Offers Five-Star Medical Service

LSI has opened a new Diagnostic & Imaging Center within the Tampa, FL surgery center to enhance the patient's overall experience.

» [Full story...](#)

» [LSI Five Day Process](#)

## Ask the Expert

This month's topic is MRI and CT Scan Review with the MRI Review Department led by Medical Director Dr. Michael Perry.

If you have a question relating to LSI surgical centers, staff, services and other related topics, please let us know.

» [Read the Q & A](#)

» [Send Your MRI for a Complimentary Evaluation](#)



## Patient Spotlight

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### Better Than Expected

Nationally syndicated consumer advocate Tom Martino found his LSI experience and quality of life to be better than expected more than a year after his surgery.

» [Full story...](#)

» [Visit Consumer Advocate Tom Martino's Website](#)



## Wellness 101

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### Ask The Doctor

**Q:** Recently, my physician told me I had Degenerative Disc Disease. What is this and how could I have gotten it?

» [The Answer](#)

» [Watch Animations of LSI Procedures](#)

### Perfecting Your Posture

As you read this, have you leaned forward in your chair or placed your elbow on the desk with your chin resting in the palm of your hand? If you did, you are not alone.



At LSI, we work to correct our posture on a daily basis and wanted to share some helpful information in this month's Prevention column.

» [Click here for more information.](#)

» [Visit the LSI Resource Center](#)



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## New Diagnostic Center Offers Five-Star Medical Service

LSI is pleased to announce the opening of the new Diagnostic Center within the surgery center located in Tampa, Florida. Situated on the first floor of the facility across from the patient café, the new area offers patients the most advanced diagnostic and imaging equipment available in healthcare today.

Patients are welcomed into the center with a private and comfortable sitting area. The highly trained imaging center professionals use new digital x-ray Radiographic Imix Orthorad hardware and software, a new GE GoldSeal LX Fixed MRI machine, and

new PACS technology which allows the team to send and receive images throughout the Tampa facility and across the country. This new equipment will improve patients' overall experience and streamline the efficiency of patient records. With this new state-of-the-art equipment, images of a patient's condition will be clear and concise allowing for easier diagnosis and quicker retrieval of the images during the patient's five day process.



The Diagnostic Injection and Pain Management Center lead by Director of Spinal Diagnostics and Therapeutics Dr. Robert Gruber along with Dr. Monica Vargas has moved out of the OR and into a permanent place within the facility. Consisting of two fully-equipped procedure rooms, four recovery and pre-operative areas, and two examination rooms, the



**Dr. Robert Gruber**

new space dedicated solely to diagnostic procedures and imaging will add to the patient's experience.

Dr. Gruber came to LSI to apply his unique blend of experience and skills using the newest approach to treating spinal conditions. Having worked in the conventional arena of spine care for many years, he is experienced in the diagnosis and management of many different conditions and communicates the benefits and drawbacks of most treatment options.

One week after the opening, Diagnostic Center Manager Roy Leathem commented, "The diagnostic center was created to provide an environment where the most complicated spinal conditions can be analyzed using a combination of digital imaging, high field MRI, and selective spinal injections. We are now able to help prescribe the most effective surgery for each patient and to do so without unnecessary delay or inconvenience. The clinical information provided will help optimize the patients' surgical experience and ultimately optimize their surgical outcomes as well."



LSI is committed to perfecting the patient experience by continuing to improve customer service and medical innovation every day.

### [LSI Five Day Process](#)



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### Ask the Expert

**Q:** How do I send in my MRI films for your review and once I do, what is the process?

**A:** After you have an MRI performed, your physician specialist may provide you with either a set of films, CD of images or a diagnostic report. All of these recorded forms can be used to diagnose a back or neck condition.

LSI receives over 250 records a day for preliminary determination of surgical candidacy. The MRI Review Department is dedicated to reviewing each record and making an initial determination on whether LSI can help. This service is essential to helping back and neck pain sufferers who seek an alternative solution to traditional open surgery or fusions. The department is led by Medical Director Dr. Michael Perry, a board certified internist who has been working with spinal patients for over 20 years. In addition to reviewing records at the institute, Dr. Perry conducts one-on-one discussions with candidates during LSI's complimentary seminars, throughout North America, educating attendees on spine conditions and related treatment options.



**Dr. Michael Perry**

With the increasing flow of records for review, the department has expanded to include Dr. Craig Burns and Dr. John Spallino. Dr. Burns practiced osteopathic medicine more than seven years before joining Dr. Perry's department. Dr. Spallino, the newest addition to the MRI Review department, contributes over 15 years of primary and emergency care experience. In their capacity as Medical Information Specialists, both physicians assist Dr. Perry with one-on-one consultations at LSI's complimentary seminars and the

interpretation and analysis of patient's records.



Once records are submitted to our department, we immediately begin the complimentary review process by entering your records into our evaluation system. The records are then disbursed to an MRI physician for review. After the physician makes an initial determination, an MRI consultant will call you on their behalf to discuss your specific symptoms and verify a

correlation between those and your record findings. A few questions an MRI consultant commonly ask are; "which side of your leg/arm are you experiencing pain?" and "do you have any numbness or tingling in your extremities?" LSI's philosophy is to treat the patient's symptoms and not just their records.

It is important to note this discussion is a preliminary diagnosis and a complete physical evaluation will be necessary to determine surgical candidacy for an LSI minimally invasive endoscopic procedure.

For a complimentary evaluation of your MRI or CT scan, films or CD by our department, please send your records to:

Laser Spine Institute  
C/O MRI Coordinator  
3001 N Rocky Point Dr. E, Suite 100  
Tampa FL 33607

If you prefer to send us a report for review, you may provide your Patient Advocate a copy by mail, email or fax. The Patient Advocate will act as your liaison to the MRI Review Department during this review process. If you have not yet spoken with a Patient Advocate, please call 1-866-853-6191 for assistance.

**[Send Your MRI for a Complimentary Evaluation](#)**



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### Better Than Expected

Thomas Martino, consumer advocate and nationally syndicated radio talk show host, suffered from severe back pain which forced him to "lock up" at times and he could not move. On his best days, Tom still had constant aching in his lower back which interfered with his daily activities, and impacted his overall quality of life. After trying different conservative treatments for his back pain; such as acupuncture, chiropractic care, spinal decompression, and prolotherapy; Tom remained in constant pain.



**Thomas Martino**

Searching online for options to relieve his chronic back pain, he came across Laser Spine Institute. After initial contact with LSI Patient Advocate Brad Campbell, Tom was confident in the LSI process and well informed of the endoscopic procedures as well as the state-of-the-art techniques performed by LSI's surgical team. For preliminary determination of his candidacy, he submitted his MRI to Medical Director, Dr. Michael Perry for review. Tom was convinced LSI was the best option after a thorough analysis and discussion with Dr. Perry.

A few weeks later, Tom traveled from Franktown, Colorado to the Laser Spine Institute flagship facility in Tampa, Florida for his minimally invasive endoscopic spine procedure. Intimidated by the large amount of patients he met in the waiting areas, Tom became concerned that he "would be treated like a number." However, after his interaction with LSI's clinical staff, Tom was impressed by the one-on-one attention and personal care he received. He felt welcomed and comforted by everyone he met through the

five day process.

After a thorough evaluation by Dr. Michael Weiss, who now heads the surgical team at LSI's new Scottsdale, Arizona outpatient surgery center, and diagnostic nerve root blocks to determine exact surgical orders, Tom underwent a laminotomy and foramintomy on his lumbar spine, with thermal ablation on his facet joints. Shortly after his post-surgical evaluation and two days of physical therapy, Tom returned to Colorado.

More than a year after his surgery at LSI, Tom is happy to report that his life has completely changed. He no longer suffers from the pain that nagged him and has found a real zest for activity once again.

[Visit Consumer Advocate Tom Martino's Website](#)



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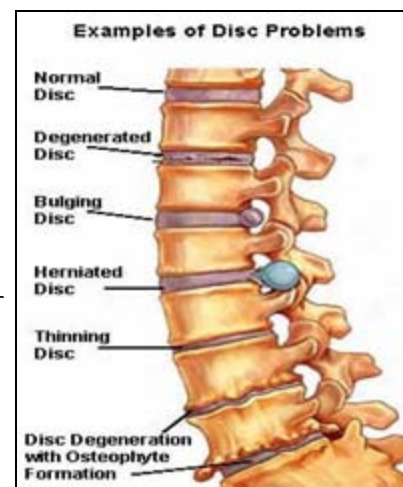
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### Ask The Doctor

**Q:** Recently, my physician told me I had Degenerative Disc Disease. What is this and how could I have gotten it?

**A:** Degenerative Disc Disease (DDD) is a commonly misunderstood condition and a vague diagnosis. DDD is the gradual wear and tear and aging of the spine and encompasses such a broad spectrum of symptoms.

Basically, as we age, the water and protein content of the body's cartilage can change, resulting in more fragile and thinner cartilage. Both the discs and facet joints of the spine are partly made up of cartilage, therefore, they are subject to degeneration. DDD can produce pain as a worn disc becomes thin, narrowing the space between the vertebrae. With less space available, nerves may become compressed, causing them to swell and signal pain. Pieces of the damaged disc may also break off and cause irritation of the nerves. As the disc loses its ability to absorb stress and provide support, other parts of the spine become overloaded, thus leading to irritation, inflammation, fatigue, muscle spasms, and pain.



There are many causes associated with DDD and the most common is aging followed by daily wear and tear, injury or trauma. If someone is experiencing pain that may be associated with the spine, it is always important to consult with a physician. If ice or heat treatment and over-the-counter medication are not working, depending on the physician's diagnosis, it is often recommended to try physical therapy and exercises to alleviate the symptoms. Surgery may be the best option only if conservative treatment fails.

LSI can treat DDD in most cases and perform a thorough one to two day evaluation to determine the appropriate surgical procedure to treat the patient. First, the clinical team would use an MRI or CT scan to better identify other conditions that might be associated with DDD which cause symptoms like pain or numbness. Once LSI is able to identify the cause of a patient's symptoms, a surgical determination is made. The surgical team can perform a minimally invasive, endoscopic procedure that will remove the portion of the disc or bone spur that may be compressing sensory nerve(s) or the spinal cord depending on the patient's pathology and symptoms.

### [Watch Animations of LSI Procedures](#)

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## Perfecting Your Posture

Do you find yourself slouching in front of the computer or walking with your head down? It is important to always think of your posture during daily activities to avoid complications down the road. Not only does better posture improve symptoms in the back and neck, it can also correct minor problems related to the spine.



Bad posture can be habitual or caused by muscle tension, illness or disease, depression and even a non-active lifestyle. People with poor posture can suffer from muscle strain or soreness, nerve impingement and joint problems. Simple steps can be taken to correct posture and relieve painful symptoms.

Correct posture means keeping all body parts in alignment for better balance and support. You can make a determination of your posture by standing against a wall and noticing any bending or leaning in your stance. You want to be able to draw a straight line from your shoulder to your ankle through your hips and knees.

In order to improve your posture, you must first examine your current posture. How do you sit in a chair or while driving? Are you slouching or leaning forward? Also, what is your standing posture? Do you seem off-balance? You can evaluate yourself and ask someone else to watch you during these activities.

Once you identify what activities affect your posture, be sure to remain conscious of these habits daily and correct them. Changing your posture does not happen overnight but can offer relief over time. Here are some ways to help you stand tall again:

#### Enhanced Ergonomics

Invest in a headset if you are on the phone for long periods

of time. Find a desk chair that will support your back and neck. Also, arrange items on your desk for easier reach.

### **Better Sleep Support**

There are a number of supportive pillows and mattresses on the market today to improve spine posture and movement while you sleep.

### **Stretching**

If you are experiencing pain, it is important to ask your doctor about stretching activities that are best for you. Practicing yoga or Pilates which involves deep stretching can improve posture. Water aerobics can help relieve muscle strain and soreness. Physical therapy loosens muscles with a variety of treatment and exercise to release tension that may be affecting your posture. If you are not interested in these activities, simple exercises can be done at home to improve back and neck pain.



### **Relaxation Technique**

A good amount of rest and relaxation can help release tension, correct posture, relieve stress and improve your mood. Laying on a hard surface like on a floor at home with lights dimmed and a relaxation CD can help relax and even help straighten the spine. Meditation can boost focus and concentration on your spine to help relieve symptoms.

It is important to remember that posture is part of our everyday health, like drinking plenty of water and eating right. Correct spine alignment is the foundation of our muscular-skeletal system and if neglected can lead to painful symptoms.

[Visit the LSI Resource Center](#)