

Dr. Jay Chun of Atlantic NeuroSurgical Specialists (ANS) Discusses the ANS Spine Center

What is the ANS Spine Center?

The ANS Spine Center offers a variety of surgical and nonsurgical treatments. We consist of several highly specialized experts, including board certified neurosurgeons. With the collaboration of subspecialized, fellowship-trained physicians, patients are guaranteed to receive the treatment that best suits their individual needs.

ANS performs the most minimally invasive spine surgeries in the state of New Jersey and we are proud to be one of a few practices nationwide participating in a national outcomes database which carefully monitors outcomes in spinal care. ANS understands that we must shift the focus and incentive away from the volume and profitability of services provided and replace it with patient outcomes. Medical and surgical spine care is, above all, aimed at improving a patient's health status and quality of life. The ANS Spine Center is always looking to evolve our understanding of what works and what doesn't in each setting for each individual patient. This powerful tool helps to further identify the right treatment, in the right patient, at the right time.

Why should a patient suffering from neck or back pain come see you?

I have dedicated my career and research to treating and advancing the care of patients with disorders of the neck and spine. We are constantly pushing the envelope with the newest treatment options. Comfortable with standard open approaches and minimally invasive techniques, our patients benefit from more than a "one size fits all" approach. Our team can decide which option is best for that person without the limitation of one specific specialty.

Is a neurosurgeon the right specialist to diagnose a neck or spine disorder?

Getting answers about the cause of your neck or back pain can be challenging. The sooner you have an accurate diagnosis, the sooner you can begin the treatment plan that works for you. It may be a nonsurgical approach or a minimally invasive procedure. Either way, a board certified,

fellowship-trained surgeon is the most qualified specialist to provide an accurate diagnosis. Neurosurgeons focus on the neck and spine throughout their entire education. We are specifically trained to treat the intricacies of the spine and surrounding nerves. Additionally, those of us who are fellowship trained in spine spend 8 years in surgical spine training while mastering the art of diagnosis.

You specialize in the treatment of the cervical spine. Can you tell us more about this focus?

The cervical spine, or neck, has some of the most important bones in the body. It is a critical region since it controls everything below the neck. Injury to the cervical region can be catastrophic. The cervical spine is responsible for supporting the head and allowing it to move, as well as controlling many key areas of the upper and lower body, including the arms, legs, bowels, and bladder. The most common chronic problems affecting the cervical spine are disc herniation and spondylosis. In both conditions, the discs that normally cushion the bones and joints of the spine become damaged and displaced and can press on surrounding nerves or the spinal cord, causing pain, numbness, and weakness.

The majority of patients with cervical spine disorders can manage their symptoms without surgery. When surgery is needed, the two most common types of cervical spine surgery are decompression or fusion. Decompression surgery removes the disc, ligament, or bone that's pressing on the nerve or spinal cord, and fusion surgery stops the movement between two bones. Most patients can return to work a few weeks after surgery. For some who opt for minimally invasive surgery, the surgery can be performed on an outpatient basis with rapid return to daily function.

While spine surgery cannot always resolve all symptoms, the surgeries in the cervical spine are some of the most successful that we have. The benefits include not only managing the symptoms but also limiting the chances of continued degeneration or a future major spinal cord injury. In the past decade, spine surgery has become much less invasive and safer thanks to advances in minimally invasive techniques, spinal instrumentation, artificial discs, and the materials that promote spine fusion.

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