Whats The Difference Between Anterior and Posterior Surgery For a Herniated Cervical Disc

You may here the terms anterior and posterior when you speak with your surgeon. It is important that you understand what that means, so you understand what type of surgery is suggested for you. Anterior means from the front. Posterior means from the back, so when we look at the spine, again looking at the spine from the side, this is the back of the head, the eyeballs are here. You look in that way. The mouth is here. This would be a posterior approach or approach towards the back of the neck. Anything from the front would be an anterior approach going through the skin in the front of the neck, and most people are very afraid of having surgery from the front of the neck. They say "why would you want to go through there?" but actually, it is quite safe and quite simple. Because this bone is only about 1 inch below the skin right here and it is very easy for us to avoid important structures such as the esophagus, and the carotid artery, and the trachea, and once we move those aside, we are looking right at the discs, right at the spine. Sometimes, we will suggest doing a posterior surgery, and there are nice ways of doing surgery endoscopically and microscopically to approach the herniated disc this way. So, it can be either anterior or posterior, but when they are talking about anterior, we are talking about incision in the front of the neck and coming in this way. When we are talking about posterior, we are talking about usually a midline incision or off to the side approaching the spine that way. Those are two terms you need to know to help you understand what your surgeon is talking about.

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