

## **Do I Need Surgery To Treat My Cervical Herniated Disc- What Are The Indications For Surgery**

I think a lot of patients really struggle with the question of "do I need surgery?" It is hard to know sometimes would you go forward. This is a big leap and is it worth having a procedure? So, let me review with you some what we call indications. These are the reasons that patients are now qualified or become candidates to have the surgery.

Number one is pain. If you have pain that is going on for 6, 8, or 12 weeks, then you are a candidate for the procedure and have to consider it and when I say pain, I mean pain that is not getting better. If you have pain that is severe for week 1 and week 2, but gets better at week 3, week 4 and you still have some pain at week 8, it does not mean you need surgery, you are getting better, so do not have surgery. I am talking about the pain that is not getting better, you cannot live with it, it is driving you nuts, that is the time to have surgery, have the procedure, get your life back, and you will be very happy.

Number two indication for surgery is, if you have significant numbness or tingling in the arm that is bothering you or interfering with your life. Numbness will frequently get better on its own even without surgery, but the best chance for getting better is with the surgery. If you have numbness, it is not a good thing to have long-term. It affects you when you are doing tasks, you could drop your tools, you could drop your hammer, you could burn yourself when you are at the stove, so numbness for a week or two is not a big deal, living your life with a really numb index and thumb is not good because you can drop things and it becomes very problematic.

The third indication for surgery is weakness. If you have weakness, that is a big problem going through the life and you can say to yourself, well now it is not such a big deal, I do not really need this hand to do this, but as time goes on and you get older, having weakness is a big deal, especially as you get older and need to use a cane or walker and if your hand or arm is giving way, then you could fall down and break a bone and it becomes a big issue. So for us, weakness is the time that we really step forward and say the patients, listen, you really need to have this done because you need to do everything you can to regain that function of strength in the arm.

So the big three indications for surgery are pain, numbness and tingling, and weakness, but as a patient, what you have to do is take a step back and ask yourself, "am I getting better" and the step back looking at this week by week and if it is week 6 and

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you are just as bad as you were at week 2, then you really have to start thinking about having surgery. If your pain is out of control at week 2, even though you have not given this all the time in the world, you may need to have surgery too because you just cannot go on with severe pain. These are the things you can talk to your doctor about, but in general terms, those are the indications for when to have surgery.

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