

# The Wellness Express™

Jump on the train to good health

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## Chiropractic Care for Failed Back Surgery

Presented by: **Total Health Systems**

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### Introduction

Back surgery - surgery to correct a problem in or around your spine - is a common treatment approach for back pain or discomfort. According to the Mayo Clinic, your physician may prescribe surgery for back problems caused by trauma, aging, poor body mechanics or normal wear and tear.<sup>1</sup> However, back surgery does not always eliminate pain or promote a return to normal work and leisure activities. In fact, a 2010 study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reports that a commonly performed back procedure - spinal fusion - was associated with a heightened risk of major complications and rehospitalization within 30 days.<sup>2</sup>

Back surgery may be necessary in some cases but a less invasive (and less costly) treatment method is often a good first approach to back pain or discomfort. Your chiropractor can counsel you on conservative strategies to try before undergoing back surgery or help you recover from failed back surgery syndrome.

### What is Failed Back Surgery Syndrome?

Failed back surgery syndrome (FBSS) is the name some practitioners use to describe the symptoms you may experience following unsuccessful back surgery. According to a 2011 study published in the journal *Pain Medicine*, FBSS can cause severe pain and disability and the rates of failed back surgery have not declined over time.<sup>3</sup> Chronic back and/or leg pain are the two most common symptoms associated with FBSS. Other FBSS symptoms may include stiffness and restricted mobility (due to pain and scar tissue), numbness, back spasms and even anxiety, depression and sleeplessness.



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### Exercise of the Week

#### Pelvic Tilt

Difficulty: Easy

*(Consult your chiropractor before starting this or any other exercise.)*

**Start:** Lie down on back with legs bent 90 degrees and feet on floor. Place fingertips on abdomen, just inside pointy tips of pelvic bones.

**Exercise:** Drawing belly button toward spine, try to flatten lower back without letting abdomen bulge outward. Hold for 1-2 counts, then release. Perform 10-15 repetitions.



## Why Does Back Surgery Sometimes Fail?

Back surgery fails to produce the desired health outcome in many cases. A 2012 article published in the *British Journal of Pain* reports that the frequency of FBSS following spinal surgery for disc-related problems is somewhere between 10 and 40 percent.<sup>4</sup> Back problems are often complex, and back surgery may fail because identifying the true underlying source of your pain can be extremely challenging (i.e., the wrong structure gets operated on). Factors that may increase your chances of experiencing FBSS include diabetes, autoimmune disease and vascular disease. A history of smoking is a major factor in failed back surgery.

Spinal muscle deconditioning, scar tissue formation, recurrent disc herniation, persistent pressure on your spinal nerve roots (i.e., branches of your spinal cord) and spinal joint instability or hypermobility are all possible causes of FBSS.

## How Can Chiropractic Care Help?

Chiropractic care is a conservative, noninvasive therapy that is capable of treating many cases of FBSS. Indeed, your chiropractor is perfectly poised to help reduce your FBSS-related pain and other symptoms. According to a study published in the *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics*, a multifactorial treatment

approach - including passive care *and* active rehabilitative exercises - may be effective in treating chronic low back pain associated with FBSS. This study also notes that chiropractors who employ rehabilitation techniques are well prepared to provide comprehensive care to FBSS patients.<sup>5</sup>

Your chiropractor can use a combination of joint manipulation, soft tissue mobilization and rehabilitative exercises to address possible causes of your FBSS. Your chiropractor can also address other musculoskeletal factors - poor posture, leg length discrepancies, scoliosis - that may be contributing to or worsening your FBSS symptoms.

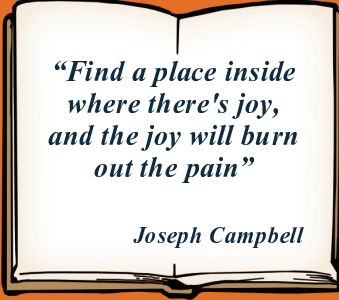
## Considerations

Back surgery plays an important role in certain health situations or circumstances. Back surgery may be necessary if you:

- Have a condition that compresses your spinal nerve roots
- Suffer spinal bone (i.e., vertebrae) fractures that cause spinal instability
- Experience vertebral fractures and spinal instability secondary to osteoporosis
- Have exhausted all conservative care measures in your attempt to relieve your back pain

Your chiropractor can counsel you on the best possible care strategy for you or explain in greater detail how he or she can address any lingering pain or other symptoms following failed back surgery.

## Quote to Inspire



*“Find a place inside where there's joy, and the joy will burn out the pain”*

Joseph Campbell

## References and Sources:

1. Mayo Clinic. Back surgery: When is it a good idea? <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/back-surgery/HQ00305>.
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5. Gluck NI. Passive care and active rehabilitation in a patient with failed back surgery syndrome. *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics*. 1996. Jan; 19(1): 41-47.

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