

## What is Cooperative Spinecare?

Cooperative spinecare refers to two or more healthcare professionals, who work together to preserve or restore spinal integrity, while prioritizing the patient's well-being. Some spine disorders require a collaborative (integrated) approach to achieve therapeutic goals.

**An effective multidisciplinary spinecare team increases the possibility for the best treatment outcome.**



## How Do I Find a Spine Physician ?

Go to the online International Directory of Spinecare Professionals and perform a search by name, location, discipline and/or specialty. This is a subdirectory of the International Spinecare Directory. The directory lists physicians of various disciplines, who have been accepted as members of the Academy. The online directory acknowledges member physicians, who have achieved advanced credentialing through the Academy. Physicians can acquire Diplomate status with the American Academy of Spine Physicians (DAASP) and prestigious Fellow status with the American College of Spine Physicians (FACSP).

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# The Role of the SPINE PHYSICIAN In Spinecare



## American Academy of Spine Physicians

**An organization of health professionals  
dedicated to excellence in spinecare**

[www.spinephysicians.org](http://www.spinephysicians.org)

## The AASP

The American Academy of Spine Physicians (AASP), is an organization comprised of healthcare professionals of various disciplines committed to excellence in spinecare. The primary mission of the AASP is to facilitate advancement and cooperation in spinecare by providing physicians, patients and the public with educational opportunities and resources. The AASP is an advocate of patient rights, including the patient's right to be informed about available diagnostic and therapeutic options



## Evaluation of the Spine

An initial spine evaluation typically consists of a thorough history and physical examination of the spine and extremities. Lab work may be recommended. Assessment of chronic or complicated problems may require additional testing such as x-rays, computerized tomography (CT), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) or nuclear studies.

If persistent or progressive neurological compromise is suspected, diagnostic assessment may require specialized electrical testing of the nerves and muscles referred to as an EMG/NCV study. Evaluation of the spine may include gait evaluation to assess the biomechanics and neurological control of walking, as well as, isolated extremity muscle assessment to evaluate the integrity of the spinal cord and spinal nerves. Examination findings are used to develop and implement an individualized treatment plan.

## The Order of Spinecare

The order of spinecare should follow a basic premise. It should begin with the most appropriate level of conservative care. The level of care should only become more aggressive if the condition requires this level of intervention. Surgery should always be a last resort. The attending physician should always attempt to use the approach, which offers the greatest potential for gain with the least exposure to risk.

## Goals of Non-Operative Spinecare Include

- Reducing inflammation and pain
- Limiting scar tissue formation
- Facilitating tissue recovery
- Increasing spinal flexibility
- Promoting optimal spinal segment mobility
- Stabilizing the spine through exercise
- Restoring and protecting neurological integrity
- Improving posture and gait
- Reducing recurrence

**SURGERY SHOULD ALWAYS BE A LAST RESORT.**

## Goals of Operative Spinecare Include

- Remove a tumor, if possible
- Reconstruct a traumatized spine
- Address progressive neurological compromise secondary to a compressive lesion/pathology
- To remove pressure (decompress) off of the spinal cord and/or spinal nerve roots
- Stabilize vertebrae which move too much
- To reduce pain and stabilize the spine, if needed .
- Restoring and protecting neurological integrity
- Reducing recurrence

## Benefits of Cooperative Spinecare

- Reduce likelihood of unnecessary testing
- Broaden the scope of therapeutic options
- Efficient continuity of care
- Early detection and timely intervention
- Improved potential for patient recovery
- Greater potential for reduced cost



## Why Consider a Spine Physician for Spinecare?

The spine is very intricate and complex . There are many neurological and orthopedic conditions, which can affect the spine and develop as the result of a spine disorder.

The term, "spine physician," refers to a physician of any discipline, who is trained and experienced in the evaluation and care of the spine and related structures. This includes, but is not limited to, chiropractic physicians, neurologists, neurosurgeons, orthopedic surgeons, radiologists, rheumatologists, pain management specialists and psychiatrists.

The term, "spine specialist," in the context of the AASP, is used to refer to a non-physician, who cares for the spine. Spine specialists often work closely with other spinecare professionals. The majority of individuals will respond favorably to a non-operative approach.