



BACK TO THE GOOD LIFE

All spinal surgeries are not created equal according to Dr. Robert Masson of the NeuroSpine Institute. The renowned surgeon's minimally invasive philosophy can mean shorter downtime for patients and a quicker return to the good life.

If there's anyone who understands the joy of an active lifestyle, it's Dr. Robert Masson. A lifelong athlete, the spinal surgeon's list of hobbies runs the gamut of physical endurance.

"I'm an avid athlete," he admits. "I love to golf. I scuba. I sail. I wakeboard. I'm a pilot. My parents were active and my four sons are all active."

His passion for maintaining an athletic lifestyle fits well with his area of medical expertise—minimally invasive spinal surgery. Dr. Masson is an internationally renowned neurosurgeon and a leader in his specialty—microendoscopic surgery, computer-assisted neuronavigation, and fluoroscopic surgery. He regularly performs endoscopic spinal decompressions, artificial disc surgeries, minimally-invasive spinal reconstructions and scoliosis surgeries, and thoroscopic surgeries, among other procedures. The advantage of minimally invasive spinal surgery to patients, he says, is a quicker recovery time. Some of Dr. Masson's patients are fully recovered several weeks after surgery.

"You can do major reconstruction surgery smaller, rather than through 12- to 14-inch incisions," he stresses. "I've done a 10-level scoliosis surgery with 12-inch rods and screws through two-and-a-half-inch incisions."

Though his patients are by referral, Dr. Masson can treat any spinal surgery candidate through his minimally invasive approach. Some of his patients come from as far away as Seattle, Los Angeles, and New York for treatment and

have included professional athletes from the NFL, NBA, MLB, and PGA/LPGA tours. He also travels extensively both nationally and internationally to teach other physicians his spinal surgery techniques.

"I teach everything I do," says Dr. Masson, who has been certified by the American Board of Neurological Surgery for 10 years. "Just recently, a spine fellow, Dr. Passias, from Massachusetts General Hospital was with me for two weeks to learn my techniques."

Dr. Masson is a member of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons, the North American Spine Society, and the Florida Neurosurgical Association. His practice, the NeuroSpine Institute, was opened in 2000 and is conveniently located in Orlando, the heart of Central Florida. The surgeon is a product developer for Synthes Spine, one of the world's leading medical device companies, and last February he performed the first replacement procedure using the company's Prodisc-C Artificial Disc in Florida since its FDA approval.

Dr. Masson's patients are the true testament to his expertise and skill, however. Kevin Cole became a patient of the surgeon in 2003 to repair lower vertebrae in his back.

"The operation was very quick. I was in the hospital less than 24 hours," Cole recalls. "My recovery was very successful, and I was driving in about one week. In the years since the surgery, I have had very little difficulty and am very active. I work out with heavy weights at the gym



[and] snow ski. My physical activities are not limited."

Patrick Cluney agrees. An ex-professional athlete, Cluney was experiencing debilitating back pain when he arrived at Dr. Masson's office.

"I went to several surgeons before making up my mind to use Dr. Masson," Cluney says. "He was truthful and made me feel optimistic at the same time."

Cluney's surgery—a disc fusion—took place in April 2005. After a year of rehabilitation, in May 2006, he was out hitting golf balls once again.

"I will always have to watch what I do and always do my exercises, but Dr. Masson was totally responsible for my life being back to normal," Cluney remarks. "He is a great surgeon. To say I recommend him would be an understatement."

For Dr. Masson and his NeuroSpine team—Wayne Gardner, P.A.-C, Charles Goodnough, P.A.-C, and Tamar Dragon, P.A.-C—returning patients to the lifestyle they once knew and loved is simply part of their philosophy.

"We don't say, 'You have a spine condition. We're going to label you disabled,'" Dr. Masson explains. "In fact, we're the opposite. We want our patients to preserve their active lifestyles."

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