



MedStar Harbor
Hospital

Is Your Aching Neck Signaling Something Serious?



“What a pain in the neck!” For many people, that’s more than just a cliché. Neck pain is one of the most common reasons to visit a doctor. Unfortunately, one of its common causes is something you can’t do much about: aging.

“Degeneration of the spine is a normal consequence of growing older,” says John J. Carbone, MD, director of The Spine Center at MedStar Harbor Hospital. “Aging is a factor for many of the degenerative disorders that can cause neck pain, including osteoarthritis and spinal stenosis.”

Those are big words to describe small changes in the spine that get worse over time. All of these conditions can put pressure on the spinal cord. The result: chronic pain, which, left untreated, can severely impact daily life.

And that’s where orthopaedic spine surgeons like Dr. Carbone come in.

“Of course, for many people, surgery isn’t the first answer,” says Dr. Carbone. “But it may be the right one when other treatments, such as pain relievers, physical therapy or corticosteroid injections, aren’t successful.”

Symptoms that may signal a degenerative spinal disorder include:

- Neck pain that worsens when you bend or turn your neck or when you cough, sneeze or laugh
- Pain, weakness, numbness, or tingling in shoulders, arms, hands, or legs
- Difficulty in using fingers for precise tasks such as writing
- Legs that feel stiff, weak or jerky, making walking difficult
- Bowel or bladder control problems

“If you have any of these symptoms, see your doctor,” says Dr. Carbone. “The sooner you get help, the sooner we can help you get better.”

About Dr. Carbone



John J. Carbone, MD, is director of The Spine Center at MedStar Harbor Hospital. Dr. Carbone is an expert in spinal reconstruction, specializing in

minimally invasive adult reconstructive and degenerative spinal surgery, adult spinal deformity surgery and orthopaedic implants. He has an engineering background and has designed and developed several patented orthopaedic devices and implants. Formerly, Dr. Carbone served as the chief of the Division of Spinal Surgery at the Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center. Dr. Carbone sees patients in the MedStar Harbor Specialty Care building, located across the street from MedStar Harbor Hospital. For an appointment, please call **410-350-8300**.

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