

# Patient Success Story



## Teacher of the year back in the classroom without pain after spine surgery

Glenda is a successful first grade school teacher with 33 years of tenure. She enjoys staying active by working out in the gym with her personal trainer, walking and playing with her two granddaughters.

When Glenda first began experiencing mild pain in her back, leg and hip, she chalked it up to years of physical activity. But when her symptoms worsened, Glenda went to her family physician to find out what was causing her pain. She was given a round of steroids which offered only temporary relief of symptoms.

When her symptoms returned, she scheduled another appointment with her doctor to learn of her options. Her doctor ordered an MRI of her spine. The results revealed spinal stenosis at L3-4. Meanwhile, Glenda was starting to experience more severe pain symptoms along with cramps, numbness and tingling in her right leg, which represents a serious symptom if not resolved promptly.

Spinal stenosis is characterized by a narrowing of the spinal canal, which places pressure on the spinal cord and nerves, because there is not enough room for them. It is similar to a ring on an injured or inflamed finger. As the finger swells, the ring constricts it and causes pain.

Her family physician referred her to South Carolina Spine Center where a spine specialist suggested injection therapy to help relieve her symptoms. Spine injections are often used to help relieve pain symptoms and give the physician important information about the spine condition. Glenda had a steroid injection which offered her

several months of symptom relief. Her personal trainer also formulated an exercise program designed for her condition.

Unfortunately, her symptoms returned. Glenda went in for another steroid injection. This time Glenda's pain and numbness came back after only two weeks. By now, her pain, numbness and tingling symptoms were greatly interfering with her quality of life. She was experiencing severe pain in her big toe also. Because of her symptoms, even the most basic activities such as standing, walking and sleeping were difficult. This was impacting her in the classroom. In order to continue to work, Glenda would sit as she taught her first grade class.

Desperate to get back to her active lifestyle, Glenda returned to South Carolina Spine Center in search of other treatment options. The spine doctor next performed a nerve block, but her symptoms persisted. Glenda also noticed spine instability; her right shoulder was shorter than her left.

Because Glenda had tried nonsurgical spine treatment without lasting symptom relief, it was time to explore her spine surgery options. Glenda was next referred to a fellowship-trained spine neurosurgeon at South Carolina Spine Center.

"I have always lived an active lifestyle and I didn't want the pain and numbness symptoms to become a permanent way of life for me," Glenda reflects. The neurosurgeon talked extensively with Glenda about the spine surgery needed to treat her spinal stenosis. While she was nervous about surgery and hesitant to be away from her first grade class for

*"South Carolina Spine Center helped me get my life back. They were just wonderful," Glenda reflects.*

an extended period of time, Glenda was eager to get back to activity and decided to move forward with the surgery. She chose South Carolina Spine Center because of its reputation of excellence in spine surgery. The center is consistently ranked in the top 10 percent of all spine programs in the US by CareChex for spinal fusion.

Glenda's surgery was a success. "I felt immediate relief from my symptoms following surgery," she says. Glenda was relieved to be able to walk without pain and she returned to working out with her personal trainer as soon as she could. The physical therapists at the Spine Center worked with Glenda's trainer in coming up with specific exercises designed to help straighten and strengthen her spine. She was happy to return to her classroom full of first graders — without the pain and numbness symptoms that had become a way of life. At the end of the school year, she was overjoyed to be selected as the Ninety Six Primary School "Teacher of the Year."

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