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— Lou Holtz, Legendary football coach and actual patient

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Understanding bilateral neural foraminal narrowing

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[By Michael Perry, M.D.](#)

Bilateral neural foraminal narrowing may seem like a complicated medical term, but this condition has a fairly simple definition. In essence, the term means that nerve passageways in the spine — on both the right and left sides — have less space than they used to, possibly leading to the compression or pinching of nerves.

If we break the term down into its individual parts, we learn that “bilateral” means both the left and right side are affected, while “neural” refers to nerves. The term “foraminal” tells us that the condition affects the foramina, which are open passageways on either side of each vertebra. These passageways provide a space through which spinal nerve roots exit the spinal column and join the complex network of nerves that serves the entire body. And “narrowing” means that the nerve passageways have become smaller. The term “stenosis” also refers to the [narrowing of the foraminal canal](#).

Often, the foraminal canal narrows as a result of another spine condition moving into the space between the vertebrae. These conditions could be a bulging disc, bone spurs or other degenerative spine conditions that cause the normal alignment of the spine to shift.

Conservative treatments for bilateral foraminal stenosis

If you are experiencing pain, tingling, numbness or weakness in your extremities on both sides of your body and your physician has diagnosed you with bilateral neural foraminal narrowing, many treatment options are available. Your physician may suggest a variety of nonoperative, conservative methods, such as:

- Intermittent periods of rest
- Alternating hot and cold compresses
- Low-impact exercise
- Prescription or over-the-counter pain medication
- Gentle stretching or restorative yoga

These conservative treatments can often be accompanied by other forms of at-home remedies to help expedite your pain relief.

What are my surgical treatment options?

If weeks or months of conservative treatments do not help your symptoms to subside, your physician may suggest that you consider spine surgery to alleviate the neural compression caused by foraminal stenosis. Keep in mind that there are outpatient alternatives to more invasive open spine surgeries. Laser Spine Institute offers minimally invasive decompression procedures that utilize state-of-the-art technology and reduces a patient's risk of infection and postoperative complications. Additionally, our minimally invasive approach to the spine shortens a patient's recovery time* compared to traditional open back surgery that cuts and detaches the muscles and ligaments near the spine.

Many forms of foraminal narrowing can be treated with our minimally invasive decompression surgery, which removes a small portion of the bone spur or damaged disc that is protruding into the foraminal canal. Some patients may require the entire disc or vertebra to be removed, however, if the spine condition is severe. In this case, a minimally invasive stabilization surgery would be performed to remove the damaged portion of the spine and then stabilize the spine with an artificial disc or a bone graft made from the patient's own body.

For more information about how our minimally invasive procedures can help you find pain relief from foraminal stenosis and other spine conditions, please contact Laser Spine Institute today and request a review of your MRI or CT scan.

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* Individual spine conditions, treatment and recovery times may vary. Each patient's experience with minimally invasive spine surgery will differ. All surgical procedures involve some level of risk. If directed to pursue surgery by your physician, prompt action is advised, as waiting may reduce the efficacy of surgical treatment. Some patients may require an experience that exceeds five days and others may require as few as four days. Patients may be required to rest 48 hours post-surgery. Should the patient be given a surgical order for a stabilization, additional time might be needed prior to the procedure for insurance authorization purposes. Postoperative instructions vary from patient to patient. Follow your doctor's advice. These procedures are reserved for those patients medically cleared and scheduled for minimally invasive treatment. Paid endorsements for Laser Spine Institute may not be for typical results. Laser Spine Institute requires each surgeon to complete an extensive Laser Spine Institute training program. MRI reviews are preliminary, and some patients' individual medical conditions may require additional testing that Laser Spine Institute will facilitate through a third-party service provider. Diagnostic procedures in some facilities are facilitated by Laser Spine Institute through a third-party

provider. Medicaid currently not accepted.

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