Get Back to Back Health
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Cutting edge spinal surgery has arrived at two OSF HealthCare hospitals – in Peoria and Bloomington, Illinois.

The endoscopic spine surgery is the latest minimally invasive surgery offered at OSF, where surgeons use tiny incisions and specialized cameras to visualize and treat a variety of routine and complex spine problems with extreme precision. This is all done while minimizing injury to healthy tissue.

“Part of the beauty of endoscopic spine surgery is that it doesn’t injure any of the natural muscle or bone. It makes recovery much faster and easier for the patient. A lot of patients will come in that morning and be home by noon. The goal is to do same-day surgery and have you back home, playing with your kids, back to work, and back to normal life faster,” says Max Kahn, MD, a general surgeon with OSF HealthCare.

Dr. Kahn and his colleague Sohail Syed, MD, are both fellowship trained in the technique, and have both been performing endoscopic spine surgeries at OSF since April 2024. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) calls the procedure a “safe, effective and efficient alternative for minimally invasive spine surgery.” Eligible patients might be dealing with spinal deformities, herniated discs, spinal stenosis or other spinal issues.

While many people probably have had an achy back at some point, there are two red flags Dr. Kahn looks for when considering endoscopic spine surgery.

“The symptom that catches my attention the most is severe leg pain. After that, it’s severe leg pain with back pain. Back pain alone is challenging because there are a lot of reasons someone can have back pain,” Dr. Kahn says. “You mow the lawn too hard, you shovel too much snow, there are a lot of reasons someone can have back pain. But leg pain or leg pain plus back pain can frequently help us narrow down where exactly on the spine the problem is happening. We can confirm that with MRI, then set you up with an endoscopic surgery.”

Typically, spinal surgeries can come with a long recovery time at an average of 6-12 weeks. Even after that, Dr. Kahn says, you still might not be back to 100%. With the endoscopic spine surgery, Dr. Kahn says recovery time goes down drastically.

“People find that with the smaller surgeries and the smaller incisions, along with minimal blood loss that can be just a drop or two, which is possible with the endoscope, that they’re feeling themselves by two weeks or four weeks maximum. They’re also able to get back to work much faster than they normally would be,” Dr. Kahn says.

Dr. Kahn says he and his team will still work with you on different options first, if they think there are non-surgical treatments that could prove beneficial.

“We do physical therapy or epidural steroid injections to try first. Once a patient knows those therapies aren’t helping, we go to this,” Dr. Kahn says.

Dr. Kahn thinks the future is bright for endoscopic spine surgeries. He says the technology will eventually expand to treat other deadly diseases.

“A very exciting application for this one day will be spinal oncology. Those are colossally huge surgeries that take months to get back to your normal life. That’s on top of things like chemotherapy and radiation, which can make recovery even harder,” Dr. Kahn says. “I think this technology with the minimal incisions and the great view you get of the problem is going to be a fantastic use of this technology for a cancer patient.”

If you believe endoscopic spine surgery is an option for you, contact Dr. Kahn or Dr. Syed at OSF by calling (309) 624-4000.