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# Sports

## Tiger Woods Surgery Performed in Chicago

### The Return of the Tiger

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My name is Dr. Carl Graf and I am an Orthopaedic Spinal Surgeon with the Illinois Spine Institute. I am a huge golf fan and enjoyed watching the Masters this past weekend to witness an incredible comeback by Tiger Woods.

Tiger Woods unfortunately fell from golf greatness when he suffered a disc herniation in his low back in 2010. Since that time, he struggled with returning to the top and underwent a total of three small spine surgeries from 2014-2015 to try and relieve the pressure on the nerves in the spine. Ultimately, Tiger underwent an Anterior Lumbar Interbody Fusion (ALIF) which has allowed him to make the greatest comeback in golf history.

**The ALIF surgery is unique, and it is offered here locally in Chicago.**

Everyone has heard about lumbar fusion surgery and how recovery can be difficult. This surgery is different. The ALIF allows a patient to typically bounce back from a lumbar fusion faster and avoids disruption of the muscles of the back. The surgery is performed in a minimally invasive fashion through a small "bikini line" incision in the abdomen, between the abdominal muscles and around the sac that contains the intestines. This surgery is performed by an experienced team of spinal surgeons and general or vascular surgeons, thus the reason it is not commonly performed, with the exception of a few specially trained doctors in area. I have performed this surgery hundreds of times over the last 10+ years in practice and have always been an advocate of the anterior approach.



Tiger Woods Returns to Golf Greatness Winning the Masters at Augusta National 2019

## Anterior Lumbar Fusion

Given Tiger's comeback to the top, I think this is a great opportunity to educate the public and let them know this surgery is available in the Chicagoland area.

When the spine degenerates over time or from an injury, the disc level collapses. The degeneration of the disc and the subsequent collapse can cause pain from the disc itself or can cause pinching of the nerves in the spinal canal. Unlike traditional lumbar spine surgeries performed from the back of the spine, the ALIF surgery allows direct access to the spine from the front. While this seems more invasive, it is not.

This surgery from the front does not disrupt any of the spinal musculature as we split between the abdominal muscles and then go around the sac that contains the intestines.

This provides excellent exposure to the front of the spine to remove the degenerated disc and help return the collapsed disc to its normal height. Once the degenerated disc is removed and the spine disc height is restored, patients typically have great relief of low back and leg pain and return to their normal activities quickly.

Congratulations to Tiger Woods, it is great to see his return to the top!



If you think that an Anterior Lumbar Interbody Fusion may be right for you or someone you know, feel free to contact us at the Illinois Spine Institute where we provide Comprehensive Surgical and Non-Surgical Spinal Care.

<https://www.ilspine.com>  
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