

## CLAIRE'S STORY

### UP AND RUNNING AGAIN

Claire is an athletic young woman who began suffering from back and leg pain in her teens. She was diagnosed with lumbar herniated disc (L4-5) and tried conservative treatment to relieve the pain. When conservative care failed, her surgeon suggested microdiscectomy, a surgery typically performed to treat lumbar herniated disc. Microdiscectomy is a procedure in which a small portion of bone or disc material is removed from the spine to relieve painful nerve impingement. Claire underwent microdiscectomy at L4-5 and was pleased with the outcome. Two years later, when the back and leg pain returned, she had a second microdiscectomy at L4-5 for recurrent disc herniation. Claire resumed playing sports and was relatively pain-free for the next several years.



*AFTER BEATING HER BACK PAIN, CLAIRE COMPETED IN AN IRON DISTANCE TRIATHLON.*

Over time, the back and leg pain returned, growing in intensity over a 12-month period. She began having episodes of severe lower back pain and numbness in her right leg. Employed as a Child Life Specialist, Claire had difficulty meeting the physical demands of her job and was forced to take time off from work. Playing sports was out of the question. "I couldn't run," she explains. "When I walked more than ten minutes, my toes would get numb. I couldn't sit for more than 10-15 minutes without being in pain. I'm an athlete, and when you can't even do normal activities, it's depressing."

Determined to break the cycle of on-again, off-again pain and disability, Claire underwent a battery of tests and was diagnosed with degenerative disc disease. Once again, she tried conservative treatments, including anti-inflammatory drugs, magnetic therapy, and physical therapy, but they failed to provide lasting pain relief.

Much to her dismay, Claire's level of function continued to deteriorate. She was limping and having difficulty standing. She couldn't bend over without pain. Given the extent of her disability, Claire's surgeon recommended the XLIF® (eXtreme Lateral Interbody Fusion) procedure as a treatment solution, and Claire readily agreed.

Days after undergoing surgery, Claire was walking and released from the hospital. Within a month, she was off pain medication and taking water aerobics classes. She went back to work part-time and eased into longer workdays. "I'm still conscientious of picking up the kids at work because of my back," she says. "A lot of my time is spent bent over a stretcher, and I can do that comfortably now."

Today, Claire is doing remarkably well. 5 months after surgery, she competed in her first triathlon, placing first in her age division. In June 2009, she entered an Iron Distance Triathlon and completed the grueling 2.4 mile swim, 112 mile bike ride, and 26.2 mile run in 15 hours and 45 minutes. "I am so happy with my results," exclaims Claire.

As with any spine surgery, there are potential benefits and possible risks associated with the XLIF procedure. It is important that you discuss the possible risks and potential benefits of XLIF with your doctor prior to receiving treatment, and that you rely on your physician's judgment. Only your doctor can determine whether you are a suitable candidate for this procedure.