



Getting Back to

Life

Living life to its fullest can mean different things to different people. The ability to enjoy a favorite sport or exercise program, spend time with loved ones and live independently are all aspects of life that can provide deep meaning and joy. For Pamela Nutgrass, living her life to its fullest meant walks and bike rides in her new neighborhood, a restful night's sleep and attending yoga class — activities that she could no longer enjoy due to severe hip pain.

“I may have fallen. At the time, I was preparing the house for sale and doing lots of cleaning, but I honestly can't recall an inciting incident,” says Ms. Nutgrass, describing when and how the pain began. “But the pain just kept getting worse. It got to the point where I couldn't do yoga or even walk around the block. Going from a sitting or lying position, such as getting out of bed in the morning, hurt terribly. I couldn't even sleep soundly because of the pain when I'd roll onto my side.”

Is surgery necessary?

Ms. Nutgrass first began experiencing hip pain in fall 2016, but she postponed scheduling an appointment to discuss treatment options until May 2017. “I'd had surgery in the past,” she recalls, explaining her hesitance. “So even though this procedure would likely be outpatient, I still wanted to avoid it.”

After five months of trying several noninvasive treatments, physical therapies and seeing a variety of specialists, it seemed as if she had exhausted all of her efforts without experiencing any relief from her hip pain. Until Beau Sasser, M.D., board-certified orthopaedic surgeon with Summit Sports Medicine & Orthopaedic Surgery, shared some interesting insights regarding the cause of her pain.

“Many patients enter my office thinking they are experiencing hip pain, and in some cases, they truly are. Others are actually experiencing pain caused by hip bursitis,” Dr. Sasser explains. “Hip bursitis, known as greater trochanteric bursitis, involves the small, jelly-like

Pamela Nutgrass can enjoy practicing yoga again, free from hip pain.

Say goodbye to pain!

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sacs called bursa. They become irritated and inflamed, resulting in localized pain over the bony prominence of the hip, called the greater trochanter. Typically, the pain is worse at night when lying on the affected hip, or while getting up from a chair after being seated for an extended period of time. It can also get worse with prolonged walking, stair climbing or squatting.”

Dr. Sasser agreed to try further noninvasive treatments to assist Ms. Nutgrass in her continued efforts to avoid surgery. Her treatments included injections to the bursa, physical therapy and dry needling. The treatments were effective for the short term, but after a few weeks, the pain would return.

“Surgery is rarely needed for hip bursitis but can be very effective for people in whom conservative treatment fails,” Dr. Sasser explains. “Removing the bursa is performed using an arthroscopic technique that only requires two quarter-inch incisions. A small camera, or arthroscope, is placed under the skin through one incision, while the other incision is used to place small instruments to cut out the bursa. This surgery is less invasive and recovery is quicker and less painful than traditional techniques.”

Living life to the fullest

In March 2018, Ms. Nutgrass decided that it was time to heed Dr. Sasser’s recommendation and get the surgery she’d been avoiding. But what she really got was her life back.

“Before surgery, one hour of sitting or remaining stationary used to really hurt,” says Ms. Nutgrass. “One week after surgery, the stitches were removed, and I left for a two-week vacation to Colorado. I flew there and drove all the way back without a problem. I never would have been able to endure a trip like that before surgery.”

After one month post-surgery, Ms. Nutgrass returned to walking around her new neighborhood and is enjoying the yoga class she’d been missing out on for so long, once again living life to its fullest.



Pamela Nutgrass and Beau Sasser, M.D., board-certified orthopaedic surgeon

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