

# Healthy You

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## Got Tips?

- ✓ Use sunscreen
- ✓ Prevent pain
- ✓ Lower blood pressure
- ✓ Plus 38 more tips inside



A PASSION FOR BETTER MEDICINE.™

 **Lehigh Valley  
Health Network**

## Living Pain-Free

How spinal cord stimulation helped McRae Lilly regain his life

**A year ago, 64-year-old McRae Lilly lived in constant pain.** “It was excruciating,” he says. “Pain medications weren’t helping at all.” The pain radiating from his lower back down both legs resulted from nerve damage caused by arthritis and lupus.

Simple tasks like putting dishes on a shelf or lifting his telescope were challenging or impossible for the Forks Township man. The pain affected his mood. “I was depressed, and didn’t care about anything,” he says. “I’d given up.” Back surgeries and pain medication failed to help. He was desperate for relief.

**It finally came in the form of spinal cord stimulation (SCS)**, a therapy designed to relieve chronic nerve damage pain. For patients whose chronic pain isn’t successfully controlled by medication or surgery, SCS may help. “Spinal cord stimulation isn’t a cure for nerve pain, yet it can help treat your symptoms and improve your quality of life,” says pain specialist Bruce Nicholson, MD, with Lehigh Valley Health Network.

In SCS, a small generator is surgically implanted in the buttocks. Thin wires deliver electrical pulses from the generator to the damaged nerves along the spinal cord, blocking pain signals before they reach the brain. Instead of pain, patients feel no pain or a pleasant massaging sensation. Patients use a remote control to adjust how the stimulation feels and better control their pain minute-to-minute.

**You may be a candidate for SCS** if you have chronic nerve damage pain resulting from failed back surgery, herniated disks, spinal stenosis or sciatica. SCS is usually only an option after other pain management treatments, such as surgery or pain medications, have failed. Patients who are considered good candidates first undergo a three-day outpatient trial to determine if SCS will benefit them. Pain relief from SCS varies from person to person, but many patients are able to decrease or eliminate their



use of pain medication and other pain relief therapies.

McRae Lilly had no concerns about SCS. “I didn’t have anything left to try,” he says. He saw a difference right away, and his outlook on life has brightened. Today he feels great and is back to his favorite hobbies—including model trains and providing a Shriners Model T car in local parades (above). “My pain is totally gone,” he says. “It’s heaven-sent technology.”



**TAKE CHARGE NOW**

• Call 610-402-CARE or visit [lvhn.org/healthyyou](http://lvhn.org/healthyyou) for information about Lehigh Valley Health Network’s Spine Center. It offers a team approach to diagnosing your back pain. That team may include physical therapy, chiropractic care, pain management or, if necessary, neurosurgery.