

Herniated Disc-Lower Back

SYMPTOMS: Symptoms of a herniated disc in the low back can include some or all of the following: Deep, dull ache may be present in the low back; Deep dull ache in buttocks and/or posterior thigh, calf and sometimes foot; Pain is mostly achey in the low back but sometimes sharp; Pain, loss of sensation, numbness and/or tingling in leg and/or foot; inability to stand on heels or toes; pain increases when coughing or sneezing. Other signs may be present. Over the counter pain relievers do not decrease the pain.

CAUSES: Injury to the discs occurs from varied causes such as genetics and as part of the normal "wear and tear" process of aging. Trauma, improper lifting and other injuries can cause the soft jelly-like center of the disc to bulge or tear through the walls of the disc. The discs are the soft spongy pads between each of the spinal vertebrae. When functioning optimally, discs act as shock absorbers allowing your body to turn and rotate in various directions. Trauma, sneezing, improper lifting and other injuries can cause the soft jelly-like center of the disc to bulge or tear through the walls of the disc. Once a disc is injured, the surrounding nerves, ligaments and muscles become inflamed and irritated causing reduced function.

Injured discs are classified as bulged, herniated, or in the worst case scenario, ruptured. Abnormal joint movement in the spine is one of the most common culprits for disc injury. When the spinal vertebrae are mis-aligned, more stress is placed on the discs making the disc more susceptible to bulging or tearing. Once the material within the disc leaks out into the spinal canal, pain and inflammation result. In the worst cases, the delicate spinal nerves are irritated causing weakness, pain and/or numbness into the legs and feet.



TREATMENT: Clinical evidence suggests that many "disc herniations" can be successfully treated, and the resulting pain and muscle spasms effectively alleviated through the application of conservative chiropractic care. This may include specific chiropractic adjustments, and adjunctive therapies such as ice and electrical stimulation. Home care might include an aggressive home icing program, stretching and possibly bracing. Modification of certain activities while at home may be recommended, such as avoiding prolonged sitting.

Will I need back surgery? By all indications, too many individuals are mis-diagnosed as having a "herniated disc." These cases are too often improperly and aggressively managed. Many of these cases have resulted in considerable unnecessary and costly surgery, often with no positive outcome or resulting in a failed back syndrome. However, there are certain symptoms that do warrant surgical intervention. Surgery should be considered if the condition is disabling, the symptoms persist without improvement, or there is progressive deterioration in the condition. Prior to undergoing surgery, at least a one-month trial course of conservative treatment should be considered as a first treatment option.

