

**SYMPTOMS:** Symptoms of a herniated disc in the neck can include some or all of the following: Deep, dull ache may be present in the neck, shoulders or hands. Deep dull ache located only in the neck Sharp pain in the neck upon movement. Pain, loss of sensation, numbness and/or tingling in the arms and/or hand. Muscle weakness. Pain is increased with forward bending, sneezing or coughing or straining. Pain or stiffness worse in the morning. Other signs may be present. Over the counter pain relievers do not decrease the pain.

**CAUSES:** The discs are the soft spongy pads between each of the spinal vertebrae. When functioning optimally, discs act as shock absorbers allowing your head neck 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 pain and/or numbness into the arms and hands.

**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. Muscle spasm and pain are the body's way of protecting you from further tissue damage. The chiropractic approach to treatment is not to attack the muscle spasm and pain, but rather to determine and correct the cause of your pain and spasm. Chiropractors are the leading experts in the field of manipulation and conservative management of disc injuries. Early chiropractic intervention can lessen the possibility of costly hospitalization, unnecessary surgery and its often negative after effects, and considerable pain. Chiropractic treatment may include a strict regimen of ice or heat, electrical therapies, special rehabilitative exercises and spinal manipulation. Your chiropractor will order x-rays, and possibly some advanced diagnostic tests such as an MRI. A referral to a neurologist, orthopedic surgeon or neurosurgeon will be given if deemed medically necessary by your chiropractor.

