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Myotherapy and Herniated Disks

Patients often inquire if myotherapy can be helpful with structural problems such as a herniated disk. If their pain is from the disk then myotherapy will not provide much benefit. But hold on . . .

I know you would think that if you have back pain, and you have a herniated or degenerative disk, the two must be related, right? Think again. I have reported on many studies shedding light on the fact that structural anomalies can be “normal abnormalities.” So one thing to remember is that even though you have pain going down your arm and you have an MRI that shows you have a C6-C7 disk protrusion, the two may not be related.

Additionally, with pain you rarely have one factor of causation. Getting relief from pain is often about addressing all of the contributions (muscular, functional, structural, psychological, etc.). You will find few pain conditions that the research shows are made worse by keeping the muscles relaxed and pliable.

I always tell people that if the doctor did not rush you into surgery and instead suggested physical therapy, rest, medication, or any combination of the aforementioned treatments, take that as a good sign.

Why? In my view doctors will not knowingly put their patients at risk of permanent nerve damage, and if they are suggesting conservative measures, that may reveal your symptoms may be responsive to noninvasive approaches.

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-John C. Gifford, CBPM, NCTMB
Owner, Motionwise®

If you have been given the results of an X-Ray or MRI that showed objective pathology, these may be some helpful questions to ask your doctor: 1. Could someone have this pathology and not have symptoms? 2. If this were your MRI what would you do? 3. Could it benefit me to keep the muscles around the affected area pliable and free of tension?

So if you have been diagnosed with a herniated disk ask your doctor if you have time to experiment with noninvasive methods. If so, I would schedule a couple of sessions of myotherapy or some form of deep bodywork to see if it reduces any portion of the pain. One advantage of myotherapy and other deep bodywork modalities is that they offer a low risk to benefit ratio, meaning that you could experience great relief on the upside with little to no risk of further injury. So I would take the risk of some time and money in the hope of relief. Till next time,



John Gifford has performed over 40,000 sessions as an approved provider of sports massage and a unique style of bodywork called Bonnie Prudden Myotherapy® and Exercise Therapy®. His mission as a clinician, lecturer, consultant, and author is to empower people to lead more active, successful, and fulfilling lives through the reduction and prevention of their muscular pain and tension.