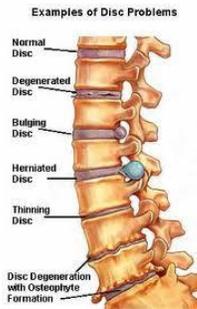


Degenerative Disc Disease/Radiculopathy/Spinal Stenosis PATIENT EDUCATION SHEET

Degenerative Disc Disease



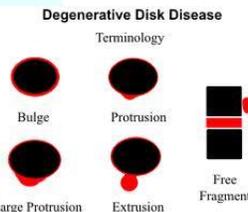
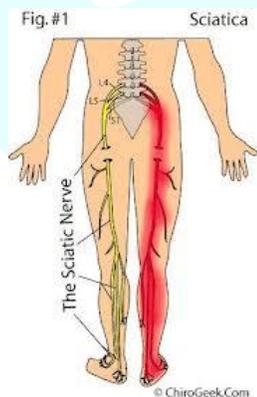
Degenerative disc disease (DDD) is often the first sign of trauma or stress, causing a breakdown in the elements of the spine. This normal “wear and tear” process is called *spondylosis* and may affect the surrounding structures (bones, ligaments, joints and nerves) in a degenerative cascade of changes.

Bulging discs are non-focal, involving more than half of the disc and can be diffuse, causing problems bilaterally or centrally. This type of disc pathology may be seen commonly with spinal stenosis.

Herniated discs are more focal, involving a smaller portion and inner nucleus of the disc, and are usually one sided, causing more radiating pain in the arm or leg. This type of disc pathology may be seen commonly with foraminal stenosis.

Radiculopathy (vs. “sciatica”)

The origin of the term “radic” means “root,” meaning the nerve root is affected in true radiculopathy. This is a spinal problem, because the nerve roots are present in the spine at each level and exit through the openings known as neural foramen. A bulging or herniated disc may block the foramen causing upon the nerve symptoms in the leg. The “sciatica” is generic term where the pain the leg in the distribution. But 90% of the time, because of an back, the more of *radiculopathy* should be used.

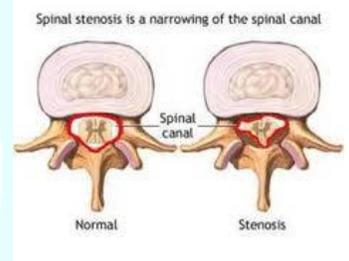


neural impingement and radiating arms or legs. a more used for cases radiates into sciatic nerve since 85% to sciatica occurs in the accurate term

Spinal Stenosis

Spinal stenosis (also called central stenosis) is narrowing of the spinal column that causes pressure on the spinal cord. This is in contrast to narrowing of the openings on the side of the spine (called neural foramina) where spinal nerves leave the spinal column. This type of narrowing is also called *foraminal stenosis* or *peripheral stenosis*.

Stenosis usually occurs as a person ages and the disks become drier and start to shrink. At the same time, the bones and ligaments of the spine swell or grow larger due to arthritis or long-term swelling (inflammation).



Spinal stenosis may also be caused by:

- ✓ Arthritis of the spine, usually as we get older
- ✓ Defect or growth in the spine that was present from birth (congenital stenosis)
- ✓ Herniated or bulging disc
- ✓ Tumors or other masses in the spine

Symptoms of spinal stenosis often include numbness, cramping, pain in the back, buttocks, thighs, or calves, or weakness of part of a leg or arm. Symptoms are more likely to be present or get worse when you stand or walk. They will often lessen or disappear when you sit down or lean forward. Most people with spinal stenosis cannot walk for a long period of time without pain. This is called claudication. More serious symptom include difficulty controlling bowel or bladder function, or poor balance when walking.

