

Definitions of common back and spine ailments:

Lumbar and cervical disc herniation: Disc herniations are caused by some of the soft inner part of the disc leaking into the spinal canal. This can occur either with or without an injury. When this happens, it causes severe leg or arm pain and sometimes numbness or muscle weakness.

Spinal stenosis: Spinal stenosis means narrowing of the spinal canal caused by bone spurs, disc bulges, and sometimes arthritis. This leads to nerve pinching and pain. Symptoms of lumbar stenosis include leg and thigh cramping and pain, especially with walking or standing and relieved with leaning over a shopping cart or sitting down. Symptoms of cervical stenosis include burning pain or numbness in the hands, difficulty with balance, or frequently dropping objects.

Spondylolisthesis: Spondylolisthesis is a slip of one bone in the spine on another. Most people call this a slipped disc. It is usually due to arthritis but can also be caused by a stress fracture in younger adults and teenagers. It can result in back pain and especially can worsen the leg pain caused by spinal stenosis.

Scoliosis: Scoliosis is curvature of the spine. In children and teenagers, it is a problem of disordered growth caused by genetics. Scoliosis in children and teenagers can often be treated nonoperatively with bracing but occasionally requires surgery to correct the curve. Scoliosis can also occur in adults where it is much more commonly the result of arthritic changes in the spine and can cause back pain and leg pain.

Adult spinal deformities: Spinal deformities are abnormal curvatures of the spine caused by arthritic changes or growth abnormalities. They can cause humpback deformities, inability to stand up straight, fatigue, and severe back and neck pain.

Spine tumors: Tumors of the spine are usually due to cancer from another location that metastasizes or moves to the bones of the spine. This causes severe back and neck pain and can sometimes result in spinal instability and nerve or spinal cord damage.

Degenerative disc disease: Degenerative disc disease is the gradual collapse of the discs between the bones of the spine. These discs act as shock absorbers in the spine and their degeneration results in back and neck pain. Disc degeneration is extremely common and can be thought of as wear and tear changes to the spine.

Cervical myelopathy: Cervical myelopathy is dysfunction of the spinal cord in the neck due to pinching. Usually this occurs due to bone spurs and disc bulges much in the same way as stenosis. Myelopathy causes symptoms such as poor balance, difficulty with holding objects such as a coffee cup, frequent falls, and numbness and tingling in the fingers. Myelopathy is a disorder that almost always requires surgery to prevent worsening symptoms

Spine fractures: Spine fractures are broken bones in the spine. There are many different types of spine fractures ranging from a mild compression fracture from a fall to a complete dislocation from an auto accident. Treatment for more severe fractures is generally surgical in order to stabilize the spine and restore nerve function.