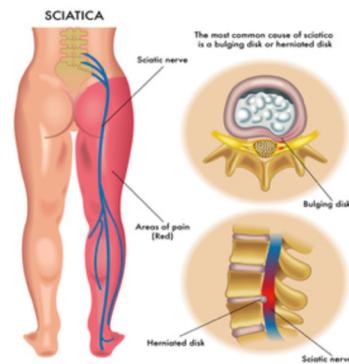


HERNIATED OR BULGING DISCS

Low back pain (LBP) is most commonly caused by damage to the lumbar disc. Often referred to as a herniated intervertebral disc, these discs are not actually herniated, but only bulging. The discs (semi-circular fibrous cushions) act as shock absorbers that separate the vertebrae (bones) and allow the spine to move. When a disc is injured, the outer layers can tear. As a result, gelatinous material from the inside leaks out beyond the outer borders of the disc, much like a jelly donut. A herniated disc occurs when bulging increases, in turn increasing the pressure on the spinal nerve. Seeing that the nerves are responsible for transmitting information to and from the legs, herniated discs may cause people to experience sciatica. Sciatica is pain, numbness or what's often described as a "pins and needles" sensation that radiates into the leg when suffering from a lumbar disc herniation.



HOME REMEDIES

After the onset of your symptoms, rest is helpful for the first day or two. However, it is very important to remain active. Try to avoid prolonged bed rest as this delays healing. Lie on your back and place a pillow beneath your knees. This position relieves and reduces disc pressure.

Pay attention to your body. Identify positions that are most comfortable and always avoid positions that exacerbate the pain.

Apply heat or cold packs to your back at 20 minute intervals. This relaxes the muscles and reduces pain. If the pain is severe, ice is the best option. Your doctor may recommend anti-inflammatory medications such as ibuprofen or naproxen to reduce pain and inflammation. Be sure to take them with food to avoid stomach irritation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Try to avoid sitting slouched, bending forward, lifting and coughing/sneezing. These actions will intensify your symptoms as they increase disc pressure.

PHYSICAL THERAPY

Your physical therapist will guide you through a program to reduce your lower back pain (LBP) and other related symptoms. Upon an evaluation, you'll be instructed to perform certain exercises at home, in between therapy sessions. Continue these exercises even after therapy ends. Once your spine pain is stable and the acute pain is resolved, safe core exercises and flexibility will be addressed. Maintaining proper posture is paramount to your recovery. Aquatic therapy has also been found to be helpful in the acute stage.