

Disc Problems

NATURAL SUPPORT WITH CHIROPRACTIC



What are discs?

- Discs are fibrocartilaginous cushions that reside between most vertebrae in your spine.
- Discs are composed of two parts: a tough, circular outer ring called the Annulus Fibrosis and a soft, inner core called the Nucleus Pulposus.
- There are no discs between your C1 (Atlas) and C2 (Axis) vertebrae or in the sacrum or coccyx. Otherwise you will find a disc located between each pair of vertebrae in your spine.

Why are discs important?

DISCS IN YOUR SPINE PLAY THREE CRITICAL ROLES:

- They are shock absorbers for the spine, acting as cushions between each vertebra.
- They act as ligaments, holding the vertebrae of your spine together.
- They help contribute to the overall movement of your spine.

What are the different types of disc problems?

Herniated Disc – the soft jelly-like material of the middle part of the disc ruptures through the outer fibres of the disc. The disc material may come into direct contact with the spinal cord or individual spinal nerves, causing severe nerve pain and loss of function.

Bulging Disc – the soft jelly-like material of the middle part of the disc is still encased in the outer fibres but is pushing the disc outward in a particular direction. Pain and pressure may be occurring and there is also still potential for nerve root irritation.

Torn Disc – the outer layers of the disc can tear due to injury and nerves can grow into the area, giving rise to pain and discomfort.

Degenerated Disc – a condition otherwise known as Degenerative Disc Disease (DDD), the discs begin to deteriorate, leading to water escaping and the disc collapsing. The discs become unstable in their movement and bone spurs begin to form in an attempt by the body to stabilize the area. The reduced disc height also places more stress on the spinal facet joints, which can lead to arthritic changes.

To know for sure which type of disc issue you are experiencing, imaging of your spine will be necessary. In some cases, X-ray imaging can help give insight and in other situations more detailed imaging of the soft tissues are needed with magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

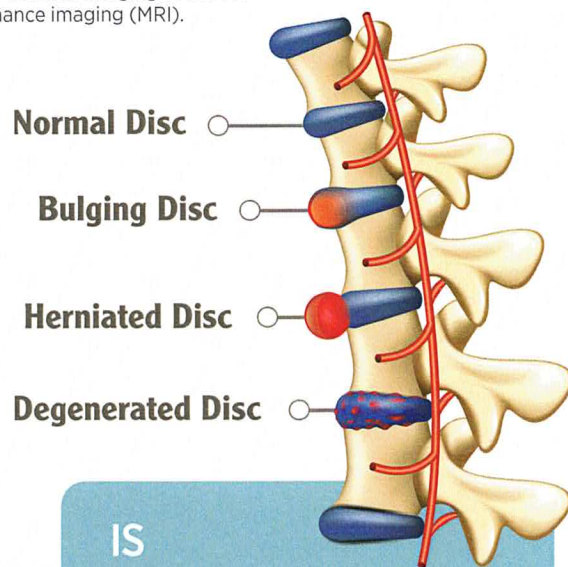
DISC PROBLEMS can be **DISABLING AND DISTRESSING** but can be **HELPED WITH CHIROPRACTIC CARE!**

Can chiropractic care help with my disc problem?

- Chiropractic adjustments do not directly correct or “cure” a disc bulge, herniation or tear, however keeping your spine moving properly can help take pressure off the discs, joints and nervous system, providing pain relief and optimal conditions for quicker healing of the disc issue.
- Depending on the nature of your disc problem, chiropractic care may be used with exercise, traction, or other forms of conservative care to help the body reabsorb the disc material as quickly as possible.
- Several randomized controlled trials and case studies have shown favorable results with chiropractic care and disc problems, for both pain and overall function.
- In most cases, chiropractic care should be used as a first line of defense for back pain, since side effects are low and treatment methods are natural for your body.

Will I need to have surgery?

- The need for surgery depends on the exact nature and severity of your disc problem; your healthcare providers can assist you in determining the potential need for surgery based on imaging results and other factors surrounding your disc issue.
- Surgery is sometimes necessary, however should only be used in a small percentage of cases after more conservative methods of care have first been exhausted.
- In rare occasions, disc material can compress nerve roots in the lower part of your spinal cord called the cauda equina, affecting the nerves that provide sensory and motor function to the bowel, bladder and parts of the legs. Cauda Equina Syndrome (CES) is typically considered an emergency situation requiring immediate surgery. Left untreated, CES can lead to permanent paralysis and incontinence.



IS CHIROPRACTIC SAFE WHEN I HAVE A DISC PROBLEM?

Existing research shows the risk of chiropractic care worsening disc problems to be extremely low. More research is needed in this area; however it appears that chiropractic care may be just as likely to worsen disc problems as basic activities of daily living once a disc issue exists.

Depending on your disc issue, your chiropractor may use specific techniques or different methods of spinal care to help assist you while trying to minimize chance of flare up.