

Overview

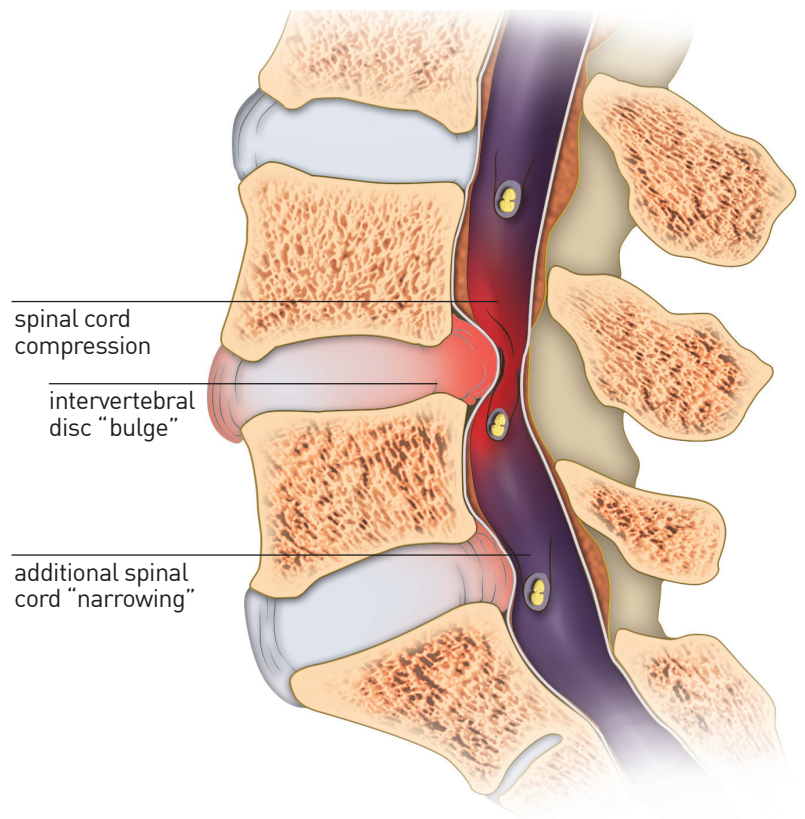
Spinal stenosis occurs when bulging discs, arthritic spurs and thickened tissues combine to “compress” the nerves traveling through the spinal canal.

With age, the spinal canal — located in the lower back — gradually can narrow, resulting in *spinal stenosis*. This narrowing process, reduces the space available for the spinal cord and associated nerves. If only a small amount of spinal narrowing occurs, generally no pain will result. However, as narrowing continues, the nerves that travel through the spinal column to the legs become constrained, leading to back and leg pain as well as leg weakness.

Causes & Symptoms

Spinal stenosis typically occurs among older adults, and arthritis as well as injuries can also cause the spinal cord to narrow.

The most common symptom of spinal stenosis is lower back pain when standing or walking. Leg pain and numbness may inhibit walking and the spine may lose the lumbar curve and appear flat. Because we tend to bend over slightly when we walk uphill and worse going down, relief is typically found when you bend forward or sit. When spinal stenosis becomes severe, symptoms may become constant and permanent nerve injury may result.



If you experience weakness, sensory loss or a loss of bowel or bladder control this is an emergency and you should call your physician immediately or go to the emergency room.



Treatment

Talk with your doctor about the best treatment plan for you. Treatment options include the following:

Medical Treatment

Often conservative and interventional procedures are used to initially treat early symptoms of spinal stenosis. A non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID), such as ibuprofen or naproxen, might be recommended to help reduce pain and inflammation (irritation and swelling). Stronger medications might be prescribed if the NSAIDs do not provide relief. Interventional procedures like cortisone injections directly around the affected spinal nerve can also help with pain relief. Exercise and physical therapy that focuses on the strengthening specific areas of the back and abdominal muscles may also help and be recommended by your doctor.

Surgical Treatment

In some cases conservative treatment options do not ease the pain and the ability to engage in daily activities. In these more severe cases surgery may be required. Should you require surgical treatment our providers will discuss this option in detail.

Follow-Up Care & Care Information

After spine surgery, your doctor will likely prescribe walking and strengthening exercises for the lower back and abdomen to help stabilize the spine.