

Dealing with a Herniated Disc

TIPS FROM ORGANIZATIONAL SOLUTIONS

The right care, at the right time, for the right outcome.™



A herniated disc refers to a problem with one of the rubbery cushions (discs) that sit between the vertebrae that stack to make your spine.

A herniated disc occurs when some of the soft, jellylike insides of the disk push out through a tear in the rubbery outer layer of the disk. Depending on where the herniated disc is, it can result in pain, numbness or weakness in an arm or leg and usually affects one side of the body only.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR DOCTOR

- Will I always have a herniated disc?
- Am I at risk of another herniated disc?
- How can I prevent getting another herniated disc?
- What can I do to treat a herniated disc?
- What can I do about the pain?
- What types of medicines are used to treat herniated discs? Are there side effects?



Many people have no symptoms from a herniated disc. Pain is often described as sharp or burning, and there is radiating numbness or tingling in the body part served by the affected nerves.



Muscles served by the affected nerves tend to weaken. This can cause you to stumble or affect your ability to lift or hold items.

AVOID

- Avoid heavy lifting, a sudden pressure on the back, or repetitive strenuous activities.
- People with a herniated disc should avoid doing strenuous activities during recovery.
- Avoid all exercises that cause pain or feel as though they are making the pain worse.
- Avoid high-impact activity, such as jogging or martial arts. These can jar the spine.



PREVENTION

Restricting your activity (modified duties), ice/heat therapy, and taking over the counter medications and prescription medications will help your recovery.

- Bend your knees and hips when you lift something and keep your back straight.
- Hold an object close to your body when you carry it.
- If you stand for a long time, put one foot on a small box for a while.
- If you sit for a long time, put your feet on a small stool so your knees are higher than your hips.
- Don't wear high-heeled shoes.
- Don't sleep on your stomach.

Call your doctor right away if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Trouble going to the bathroom or loss of bowel or bladder function.
- Loss of feeling in the feet or legs.

STRETCHES & EXERCISES

TIMELINE TO RECOVERY

In most cases, the pain from a herniated disc will get better within a couple days and completely resolve in 4 to 6 weeks.



STANDARD RESTRICTIONS & RETURN TO WORK

- A) Exercise regularly. Strengthening the trunk muscles stabilizes and supports the spine.
- B) Maintain good posture. This reduces pressure on your spine and disks. Keep your back straight and aligned, particularly when sitting for long periods. Lift heavy objects properly, making your legs — not your back — do most of the work.
- C) Maintain a healthy weight. Excess weight puts more pressure on the spine and disks, making them more susceptible to herniations
- D) Genetics. Some people inherit a predisposition to developing a herniated disk.
- E) Avoid repetitive movements.
- F) If you sit all day, get up and walk around every hour.
- G) Practice safe lifting and bending techniques.