PHYSIO Ed.
ACTIVE FOR A LIFETIME

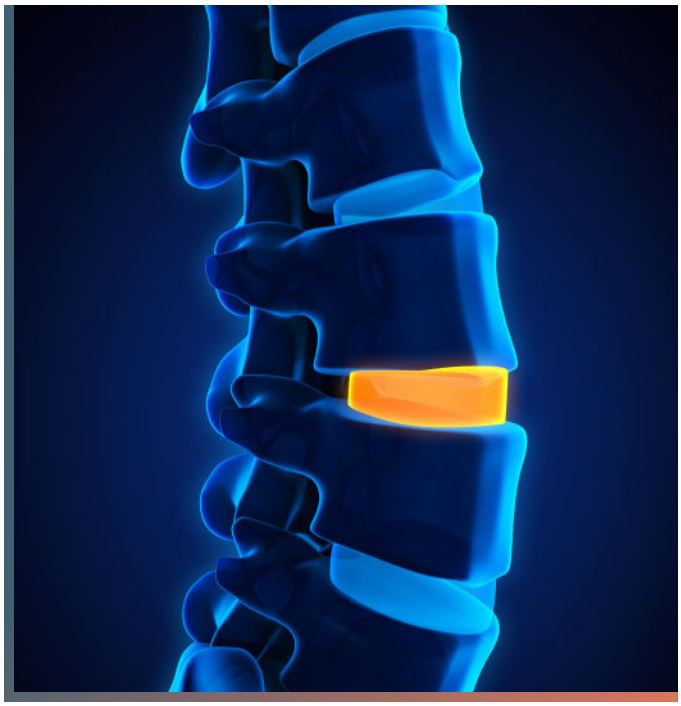
LUMBAR DEGENERATIVE DISC DISEASE
Fact Sheet

OVERVIEW

Between each of the vertebrae that make up the spine there is a flexible disk of cartilage that cushions and adds flexibility to the connected bones. With age, fluid and protein changes in the body's cartilage may make vertebral disks less flexible. This can make the spine less stable and more prone to disk herniation.

This is seen on x-ray as a loss of disk height or a "squashed appearance between the vertebrae.

Degenerative disc disease is one of the most common diagnosis related to serious neck and back pain.



CAUSES OF DEGENERATIVE DISEASE

Onset of degenerative disc disease typically occurs after 35 years of age. Previous injury or exposure to repetitive tasks are contributing factors. Family history, lifestyle, age, activities, and trauma are all considerations.

SYMPTOMS OF DEGENERATIVE DISEASE

- Back Pain
- Neck Pain
- Hunched appearance
- Weakness and numbness in arms and legs

TREATMENT FOR LUMBAR DEGENERATIVE DISC DISEASE

- Severity determines the treatment
- Assess and monitor neurological status
- Work on improving stiffness in spine
- Improve flexibility in surrounding areas such as the hips, shoulders, and thoracic spine
- Teach postural alignment and modifications of activity to decrease spine stress
- In the case of a bulging disc, surgery may be recommended when symptoms don't respond to physical therapy

EXERCISE 1: Supine Diaphragmatic Breathing



Instructions:
Begin lying on your back with your knees bent and feet resting on the floor.

Exhale, drawing in your abdominals as if you are pulling your belly button toward the floor, then inhale, focusing on expanding your belly instead of your chest.

Make sure to keep your low back flat on the ground during the exercise.

EXERCISE 2: Hip Flexor Stretch



Instructions:
Begin lying on your back at the edge of a table or bed with your knees bent and feet resting flat on the bed.

Lower your outside leg off of the table until you feel a stretch in the front of your hip and hold.

Try to keep your back flat on the bed during the exercise.

Important:
The therapeutic exercises described on this page are for reference purposes only and may or may not apply directly to your condition. Only perform the exercises assigned by your physician. By using this information, you understand the potential risks connected with activity in any exercise, physical fitness or training program.