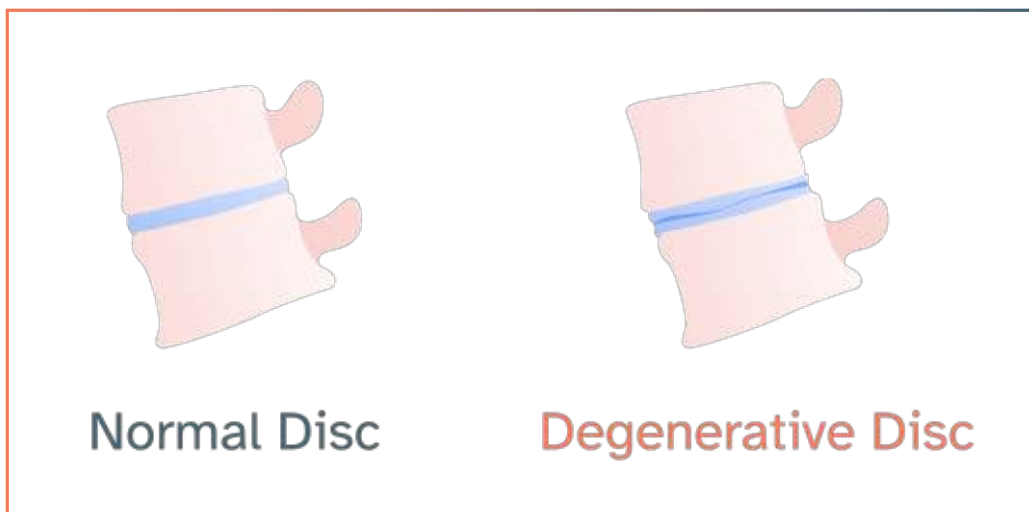


OVERVIEW

Between each of the vertebrae that make up the spine there is a flexible disc 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 discs 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 disc 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 CERVICAL DEGENERATIVE DISC 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 CERVICAL DEGENERATIVE DISC DISEASE

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

TREATMENT OF CERVICAL 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: Seated Cervical Retractions



Instructions:

Begin sitting in an upright position with your feet flat on the floor.

Gently draw your chin in, while keeping your eyes fixed on something in front of you.

Make sure that you do not look down as you do this exercise, or bend your neck forward.

EXERCISE 2: Supine Backstroke (Thoracic Mobilization Backstroke)



Instructions:

Begin lying with your arms lying by your sides.

Raise one arm straight overhead, letting it drop toward the floor.

Hold, then bring it back to the starting position and repeat with your other arm.

Make sure not to arch your back as you raise your arms overhead.

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.