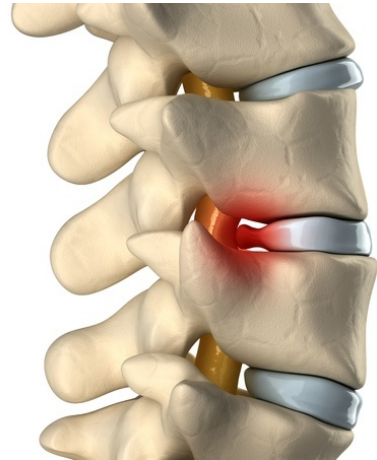


Lumbar Disc Dysfunction

Low back pain is a very common condition treated in physical therapy. Between 60-80% of the population will experience low back pain at some point in their life. While many episodes are due to muscular strains, they may also be due to a problem in the spine itself. The lumbar spine, or lower back, helps with stability, mobility, and protection of the spinal cord and internal organs. The lumbar spine is made up of five vertebrae. In between each vertebrae there is a spinal disc which acts as a soft cushion to help with shock absorption and resist compressive forces of the spine. The disc is made up of an annulus fibrosus, an outer shell, and the nucleus pulposus, the “jelly like center”. As we age our discs can lose their elasticity and frequently show signs of deterioration making us more vulnerable to injury.

A disc herniation may occur after minor trauma, rotation and flexion of the spine (being in a bent over position), or lifting a heavy item with poor posture. With a disc herniation, the inner contents of the disc may spill out and compress onto a spinal nerve. Herniated discs do not always cause symptoms however when they do, a person may experience low back pain as well as numbness, tingling, or weakness into their buttocks area or one of their legs. The most common area of disc herniation is at L4-L5 and L5-S1.



A disc herniation can be diagnosed based on subjective history, medical history, physical exam, and/or diagnostic testing. A physical therapist can help determine the cause of your back pain. They will look at your range of motion, strength, lumbar mobility, and perform a neurological examination when necessary. They may also perform other special tests to help determine any disc involvement.

There are various treatments in physical therapy that can be done for a disc herniation. At Lakeshore Physical Therapy an experienced physical therapist will fully evaluate your symptoms and create an individualized plan of care for your needs. Some physical therapy treatment may involve range of motion exercises, manual therapy, as well as exercises to strengthen your core and improve your posture. Patient education on lifting techniques and postural control also plays an important part in maintaining safe back mechanics.