

# Spinal Stenosis

Spinal stenosis is narrowing (stenosis) of the spinal canal that may occur in any of the regions of the spine.

## Symptoms:

This narrowing could cause symptoms such as: pain, numbness, tingling sensation and weakness in your arm or leg. Many people have evidence of spinal stenosis on MRI, but have no signs or symptoms. When symptoms do occur, they often start gradually and worsen over time. Symptoms vary, depending on the location of the stenosis.

Narrowing in the cervical spine (neck) can cause numbness, weakness or tingling in the arm, hand, leg or foot. Narrowing in the lumbar spine can cause pain, weakness, numbness or cramping in your legs when you stand for long periods of time or when you walk. The discomfort usually eases when you bend forward or sit down. In severe narrowing of spinal canal, you may also lose the control of bladder and bowel function.

## Causes:

While some people are born with a narrowing in their spinal canal, most spinal stenosis occurs when something happens to reduce the amount of space available within the spine. Causes of spinal stenosis may include:

**Bone spurs**- wear and tear of your spinal bones can lead to the formation of bone spurs, which can grow into the spinal canal.

**Herniated disks**- as we age, we lose the water content in our discs and that can lead to herniation and narrowing of the spinal canal

**Thickened ligaments**- the ligaments that hold the bones of your spine together can become stiff and thick over time leading to narrowing of the spine.

**Injuries**: car accidents and other major trauma may damage the contents of the spinal canal leading to spinal stenosis.

## Testing:

Physical examination is the first step to assess the cause of your pain. Your doctor may order X-ray, MRI, CT scan, CT myelogram or nerve conduction studies.

## Treatment:

Over the counter medication such as Ibuprofen, Naproxen and Acetaminophen may be recommended. Muscle relaxers, antidepressants and anti-seizure drugs may be helpful as well. Other treatment options are:

- Life style modifications
- Physical therapy
- Chiropractic treatment
- Epidural Steroid Injection

Some patients may eventually need surgery if they continue to have pain, weakness, numbness or loss of bladder and bowel function. Our providers will refer you to a surgeon if it is medically necessary.