

Agonizing Spinal Disc Failure

Believe it or not, there is no such thing as a slipped disc, though most people use the expression when referring to spinal disc problems. Even doctors occasionally refer to agonizing disc failure as slipped disc, blown disc, and the like.

The correct scientific term is *herniated nucleus pulposus*. But patients prefer to say slipped disc, so why not?

In order to understand what happens in so-called slipped disc conditions, let's take a look at what a spinal disc is.

SPINAL DISCS

The bones of the spine (vertebras) are separated and cushioned from one another by highly-specialized tissues called discs, shaped something like rubber washers and averaging about one-half inch thick.

HEALTHY DISCS VITAL

The importance of discs to one's well-being can hardly be exaggerated. They keep vertebrae from grinding on one another and at the same time help form notches between vertebrae so that spinal nerves can exit, fan out, and serve all areas, organs, and parts of the body with vital nerve energy. Also, spinal tension caused by the rubbery discs helps keep the spinal ligaments taut and thus stabilizes the spine as it protects the delicate spinal cord.

The disc's structure — a tough outer wall encasing a rubbery, spongy core — allows them to compress repeatedly while recovering their shape instantly (like a sponge) as they help the spine absorb the shocks, knocks, bumps, twists, and bends encountered in everyday living.

HERE COMES PAIN

Normally, discs perform their duties perfectly for a lifetime, but sometimes they herniate (protrude) and thereby press, pinch, irritate, or otherwise compromise adjacent spinal nerves. This causes great pain, sometimes so intense it disables its victim.

MAJOR CAUSES OF "SLIPPED" DISC

Some disc protrusions are caused by injury to the spine. Some result from occupational or recreational stresses over a long time. Even repeated sitting or standing in a stressful way can bring on disc problems.

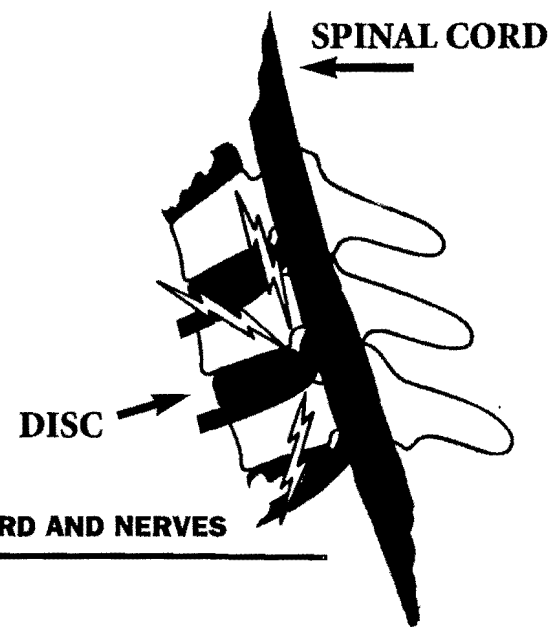
Then there are disc problems which develop slowly through disc degeneration and thinning, a process so gradual over the years it goes unnoticed until pain and other symptoms demand attention.

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DIFFERENT BACK TROUBLES MAY ACT ALIKE

While pain is the common denominator for disc problems as well as most other back problems, treatment must be tailored to the specific cause. A thorough chiropractic examination can determine whether the pain is caused by disc failure, vertebral misalignments, or other problems. For example, intense pain along the sciatic nerve (down the leg) can stem from disc involvement, vertebral subluxation, or a variety of other conditions.

That's why back pain calls for a chiropractic examination without delay. Many severe back problems get that way through neglect early on.



BULGING DISC PRESSING ON SPINAL CORD AND NERVES