

Information from your chiropractor on:

Lumbar Disc Herniation



What is wrong?

A herniated disc is a bulging of the cartilage (known as the disc) between two vertebrae. Pain and tingling sensations in the leg are caused by a nerve being irritated by inflammation around the herniated disc. Therefore, the condition is also referred to as 'nerve root irritation'.

Initially, pain from a herniated disc can be very severe and can influence your movement, your sleep and, of course, your mood.

Make sure you ask all the questions you may have and talk about all your worries regarding your situation and symptoms when you see your chiropractor.



Will I need imaging?

Imaging (CT-scan, MRI or x-ray) is not necessary to establish the diagnosis. Imaging is also not necessary to decide the best treatment for you. CT or MRI may be necessary if you don't experience adequate improvement during the first six to eight weeks of your treatment.

How will it go?

Your pain will typically improve during the first 1 to 2 weeks and most people experience significant improvement during the first 3 months.

In 4 out of 10 people the pain goes away completely after three months, but some will experience discomfort for more than 1 year. Longer lasting discomfort is tolerable for most people, and it will not keep you from resuming your ordinary activities and work.

Most people do not need surgery for a disc herniation. An operation will only be considered if you still suffer from significant pain or if you are not well on the way to resuming normal activities or work after 8 to 12 weeks.

Treatment

A herniated disc heals like a wound. Therefore, adequate time for natural healing is the main factor that will help you to get well.

The first stage in your treatment is counselling regarding what you can do to relieve the pain yourself. This may include relieving positions and movements and painkilling medicine.

Your chiropractor will assess if you will benefit from exercises or manual treatment of the joints and muscles in your back. This treatment does not take away the herniated disc, but it will relieve your symptoms and help you move during the natural healing process. When the worst irritation of the nerve is over, you might need help to gradually rehabilitate your back.

What can you do?

It is important that you stay as active as your pain allows you to. You should avoid lying in bed during the day if at all possible. If you need to lie down, do so for short periods of time. Move as much as you can to keep your body going.

It is normal for your back to ache when you move, but you should avoid activities that worsen your pain or increase the tingly sensation in your legs. It is not dangerous to provoke the pain in your leg, but it may sustain the irritation of the nerve, like when you keep scratching a healing wound.

Go back to work as soon as you can. If possible, try to get an agreement to go in for a few hours a day at first.

Please note

On very rare occasions, a herniated disc can get immediately worse. Contact your chiropractor, medical doctor or an emergency unit at once if:

- You have no sense of when you need to go to the toilet, you cannot urinate, or you experience any leaking of urine or faeces
- You have numbness between your legs, e.g. it feels odd when you wash and dry yourself
- You lose power in your leg (you are unable to stand on your toes/heals or do squats), or you are unable to control your legs



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The information in this folder adheres to the National Clinical Guideline for the non-surgical treatment of recent onset lumbar nerve root compression (lumbar radiculopathy) published by the Danish Health Authority.

<http://sundhedsstyrelsen.dk/da/udgivelser/2016/lumbal-nerverodspaaavirkning-ikke-kirurgisk-behandling>