

A short note on Lumbar Disk Disease (Herniated Disk)

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Lumbar disk disease

Lumbar disk disease occurs when a disc in the lower back area of the spine swells or herniates between the bony areas of the spine. It refers to as a problem with a rubbery disc between the spinal bones.

Backbone or vertebral column is made up of 33 vertebrae separated by the spongy disks. The spine is divided into 4 areas. They are: Cervical spine, Thoracic spine, Lumbar spine, and Sacral spine.

Cervical spine: The first 7 vertebrae, located at the neck area.

Thoracic spine: 8-19 vertebrae, located at the chest area.

Lumbar spine: 20-25 vertebrae, located in the lower back area.

Sacral spine: 26-33 (last 5 vertebrae, below the waist, includes the 4 vertebrae that make up the tailbone (coccyx)).

Lumbar disk disease occurs at 5 bony segments which are located in the lower back area.

Lumbar disk disease is caused by a change in the structure of the normal disk. It happens due to aging, the normal disk break down that occurs within. Sometimes, a severe injury can be a cause.

Risk of lumbar disk disease is physical inactivity which may cause weak back and abdominal muscles, and do not support the spine. Back injuries increases in people who are normally physically inactive participate in overly strenuous activities. Jobs like twisting, heavy lifting may also cause back injuries.

Symptoms of lumbar disk disease vary depending on the disk which has herniated.

- Continuous back pain may be worse by coughing, sneezing, movement, or standing for longer time.
- Sciatica – pain that starts near the back or buttock and travels down the leg to the calf or into the foot
- Muscle weakness
- Changes in bowel function
- Spasm of the back muscles
- Muscle weakness in the legs
- Numbness in the leg or foot
- Decreased reflexes at the ankle or knee

Lumbar disk disease can be diagnosed by X-ray, MRI (Magnetic resonance imaging), Myelogram, CAT or CT scan (Computed tomography scan), EMG (Electromyography).

Treatment for lumbar disk disease

- Bed rest
- Weight control
- Education on proper body mechanics (to help decrease the chance of worsening pain or damage to the disk)
- Physical therapy, (massage, conditioning, ultrasound, and exercise programs)
- Use of back support of lumbosacral
- Medication to relax muscles and pain killer to control pain

Complications of lumbar disk disease include back and leg pain that interferes with the individual daily activities.

Lumbar disk disease can be prevented by healthy weight maintenance, regular physical exercise, and using good posture.

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