



Between each vertebrae of the spine exists a disc. These discs contain a jelly-like material that helps cushion the spinal column. Occasionally, damage to the supportive ligaments of the vertebrae causes a disc to shift from its normal alignment and place pressure on surrounding structures, such as the spinal cord. This can result in a herniated (ruptured) disc.

CAUSES

- Sudden injury from acute trauma
- Ongoing chronic stress

SYMPTOMS

- Pain in the back, that often affects one side
- Pain that gets worse with movement, sneezing, coughing or straining
- Muscle spasms in the back
- Pain, numbness or weakness affecting one arm or leg (depending on whether injury is in the neck or low back)
- Muscle loss
- Loss of bowel or bladder function (incontinence)

TREATMENT

- Rest
- Ice or heat
- Medication
 - NSAIDS help decrease swelling, pain and fever. **ALWAYS ASK YOUR PROVIDER IF NSAIDS ARE SAFE.**
 - Acetaminophen to decrease pain
 - Prescription pain medicine
 - Muscle relaxant to control spasms
 - Oral steroids
- Stretching exercises, strengthening exercises and posture training to help stabilize the back, strengthen muscles and prevent recurrence of symptoms
- Epidural steroid injections
- Surgery for cases that have not responded to conservative treatment

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Symptoms get worse or do not improve in two to four weeks, despite treatment.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop loss of bowel or bladder function.
- You develop new, unexplained symptoms.