



# Understanding Herniated Discs

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## Understanding Herniated Discs

Back pain can develop for all sorts of reasons. From a car accident to bad posture, to an uncomfortable seat for a prolonged period of time, back pain can come out of nowhere and cause no small amount of discomfort once it arrives.

There are some back injuries, however, that are even more painful than your run-of-the-mill back pain. A herniated disc is one of the most painful back injuries that you can experience, and it is far more common than you may be initially aware.

### WHAT IS A HERNIATED DISC?

Your spine is made up of a series of interlocking bones with small cushions in-between each joint socket. The structure of your spine is what allows you to move freely from side to side. Every time you crunch your abdomen by bending forward, or lean to one side or another for a deep stretch, those little vertebral bodies move with you, keeping you comfortable and your back strong. Without cushioning in between each of those sockets, the bones would rub against one another with every movement, and this would be incredibly painful.

When a disc becomes herniated, the cushioning in

between the vertebrae will rupture, essentially deflating the cushioning in between the vertebrae and causing the bones to begin to rub against one another. This is painful enough as it is, but can become even more painful if the herniated disc actually begins to press on the adjacent spinal nerves, causing the pain to spread even further up the spine.

The most common placement for a herniated disc is at the lumbar vertebrae in the lower back. While it is not the only reason that pain can become severe in the lower back, it is definitely one of the most severe forms of back pain. If you suspect that you may have experienced a herniated disc it is important that you seek medical attention, such as from your physical therapist. A herniated disc will not heal on its own, and working with a physical therapist is one of the best ways to experience relief from the pain associated with this common concern.

### HOW DOES THIS HAPPEN?

The vertebrae in the spine are stacked closely together, with only a small amount of space for the discs in between each bone. A disc can become herniated as a result of injury, car accident, or even simply from overuse. One of the most common causes of a herniated disc is heavy lifting.

# How Are Herniated Discs Treated?

Weight lifters have to be especially wary not to suddenly lift something too heavy, otherwise risk experiencing a slipped disc. But experienced gym-goers are not the only ones at risk. Every time you attempt to move a piece of furniture, a heavy box, or even a big bag of books you need to be wary to lift correctly, otherwise face the risk of potentially herniating a disc in your back.

## TREATMENT FOR HERNIATED DISCS

Pain associated with a herniated disc often develops in the sciatica nerve, and doesn't subside with simple rest and relaxation. While hot and cold therapy will help alleviate the pain associated with many different back issues, it won't make the pain of a herniated disc go away. The pain is often frequently associated with numbness, weakness, and tingling in the legs. In many situations, the pain will feel more severe after initial movement, such as standing up or laying down. Many people mistakenly refer to having a

herniated disc as having "pinched a nerve," but that is not the case.

Physical therapy is a great resource for attempting to overcome the pain associated with a herniated disc. A combination of passive and active techniques is typically employed, including deep tissue massage, electrical stimulation, and hydrotherapy, as well as deep stretching and strength building.

If you suspect that you may have a herniated disc, contact a physical therapist right away. Attempting to engage in therapy at home could lead to further injury. It is best to have an experienced therapist assess your injury before attempting any treatment options.

**Contact Therapy Works to have an experienced therapist assess your injury and develop a treatment plan. Call us at (785) 749-1300 or visit [www.therapyworkskansas.com](http://www.therapyworkskansas.com) to schedule an appointment today!**

## Show Us Some Love!



If you've had a great experience at TherapyWorks, give us a shoutout! Scan the QR Code to leave us a Google review and help us help more people in our community!

## Exercise Essentials *Helps loosen your lower back.*



### PRONE ON ELBOWS

*Lie on your stomach, hands beside your shoulders. Push with your arms up on to your elbows. Hold for 10 counts then return to start position. Repeat 8 times.*



# Enjoy the Holidays Without Overeating

## 1. Don't Skip Meals

Saving your appetite for a big holiday party or feast? Don't. Skipping meals during the day may result in overeating. It is especially important to have breakfast, as research shows that those who eat this important morning meal tend to consume fewer calories throughout the day. Include lots of fiber by eating fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Fiber-rich foods are high in volume and will satisfy hunger, but are lower in calories.

## 2. Eat Small Portions

Holiday meals tend to be large, buffet-style and include second and third helpings. While one might not eat an entire cake, a common mistake is eating large portions of foods that are perceived as healthy. It's important to include nutrient-rich foods in your diet, but also remember that these foods have calories as well and should be eaten in moderation. Using this approach at the holiday dinner table will allow you to maintain a healthful eating plan — one that can also include dessert.

## 3. Pick a Strategy to Avoid Overeating — and Use It!

There are many strategies to help you avoid overeating. Using a smaller plate,

for instance, allows you to put less food on your plate and encourages proper portion sizes. Also, start by filling your plate with vegetables and salad before going to the entrees and desserts. Eating a salad before your meal can help you eat fewer calories overall. Eat slowly and savor every bite, and before you go back for seconds wait 10 minutes to see if you really still are hungry.

## 4. Keep Moving

Finally, after dinner, get some physical activity. This is a great time to go for a walk and catch up with family members, or play catch or a game of basketball with the kids.

## 5. Visit with a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist

Need help figuring out how to politely refuse Aunt Sally's push to fill your plate again? How about ways to stick with your personal lifestyle goals? For more information on eating well, contact a registered dietitian nutritionist in your area.

Sources:

<https://www.eatright.org/health/lifestyle/holidays/how-to-enjoy-the-holiday-without-the-weight-gain>



## Post-Surgical Rehab at TherapyWorks

**Why Post-Surgical Rehab?** Physical therapy has been known to relieve pain without the need for pain management drugs. Pain-killing drugs mask the pain while physical therapy resolves the issue where the pain is originating. This is achieved with specialized methods, techniques, and modalities, such as ultrasound, joint mobilizations, electrical stimulation, and home exercise programs.

**What are the benefits?** Both pre- and post-surgical rehab are essential elements of successful surgical outcomes. Any type of surgery can be considered a form of trauma and can affect the body differently. Post-surgical rehab with a physical therapist is especially important in order to make sure everything goes smoothly after your operation. Choose TherapyWorks for your Post-Surgical Rehab. Call us to learn more.

**Call us today to learn more about Post-Surgical Rehab!**

## Staff Spotlight



**Coral Reber**

**PTA**

Coral Reber, CPTA completed her associate's in Physical Therapist Assistant and Bachelor's in Health Service Administration at Washburn University in Topeka, KS. Coral realized she wanted to do physical therapy after she tore her ACL in her last soccer game of her senior year.

Coral loves watching patients achieve their goals and cheering them on as they continue to work hard. Coral has a strong interest in orthopedics and sports rehab. Her hobbies include running, reading, baking, playing/coaching soccer, and hanging out with family.

## Patient Success Spotlight



*"Great staff, I would highly recommend TherapyWorks."*

**— Laura**

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