

Understanding Herniated Discs

Health & Wellness Newsletter

Are you struggling with severe lower back pain? Did you injure your back when bending or twisting? You could be suffering from a herniated disc.

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 of. A herniated disc is commonly associated with severe or sharp pain starting in the lower back (or neck) radiating down the leg (or arm). It can be so intense that people struggle to do everyday activities.

Call the Physical Therapy Center today to make an appointment. With guidance from our physical therapists, you can find solutions to your pain and get back to living the life you enjoy!

What is a Herniated Disc?

Your spine comprises a series of interlocking bones, called vertebrae, with a specialized tissue in between each vertebra called the intervertebral disc (aka disc). The structure of your spine is what allows you to move freely forward and back, rotationally and from side to side.

The discs provide cushioning and allow motion throughout the levels of the spine. The disc consists of fluid the consistency of toothpaste and moves depending on the positions and movements we perform. As we get older, the disc will start to break down and dehydrate, making it more susceptible to herniation.

A herniated disc is a condition in which the nucleus pulposus (located within the center of the disc) herniates. This herniation causes pain and maybe even more pain if the herniated disc begins to press on the adjacent spinal nerves, causing pain and inflammation.

Causes of Disc Herniation

The most common cause of disc herniation is the degenerative process. As we age, the disc is less hydrated, and it weakens. This process makes the disc more susceptible to herniation.

The second most common cause of disc herniation is trauma. The most common injuries are bending, twisting, and lifting events. It is also possible to herniate from traumas related to sports injuries or car accidents. In these cases, the herniation occurs as a result of overloading of pressure on the disc.

A recent study found that static overloading, like prolonged sitting and sedentary lifestyles, may be the mechanism in younger people without significant degeneration in their discs. The prolonged postures, especially slouched postures, lead to a shearing type of pressure that weakens the disc, making it more susceptible to herniation.

Risk factors that can increase your risk of a herniated disc include:

- **Smoking.** It's thought that smoking lessens the oxygen supply to the disc, causing it to break down more quickly.
- **Weight.** Excess body weight causes extra stress on the discs in your lower back.
- **Occupation.** People with physically demanding jobs that require repetitive lifting, bending, and twisting also can increase your risk of a herniated disc.
- **Sedentary lifestyles.** Prolonged sitting postures, whether in an office or vehicle, have a greater risk of back problems.
- **Genetics.** Some people inherit a predisposition to developing a herniated disc.

Exercise of the Month

Angel On Back



Start by lying flat on your back with your arms straight down by your sides, your palms down, and your legs together. Slowly slide both arms straight up over your head and simultaneously slide both legs outward. Slide your arms back down and your legs back in. Repeat 3 sets, 10 reps each.

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Treatment for Herniated Discs

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.

Your physical therapist will perform a thorough physical examination and provide you with solutions that work based on the findings. A combination of passive and active techniques is typically employed, including:

Education

Understanding the source of your pain and managing it can help you be proactive and find a solution.

Advice to Stay Active

It is crucial to stay active. Your physical therapist can help you identify modifications to painful tasks and help you be safe and active.

Therapeutic Interventions

A physical therapist will tailor your exercises, monitor you, and progress you based on your individual needs.

Supervised exercise therapy includes:

- Range of motion exercises
- Proper stretching exercises
- Strength exercises
- Manual therapy techniques for pain relief and improved mobility
- Electrical stimulation for pain relief

Contact Our Clinic Today

Physical therapy aims to restore range of motion and improve strength while reducing the general experience of pain. It provides targeted exercises that support the spinal joints with precise movements that help reinforce strength and range of motion.

Call the Physical Therapy Center today for an assessment and learn what steps you can take to alleviate your pain and prevent further episodes.

[Schedule Appointment](#)

Sources: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK441822/>, <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/6/12/e012938>, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5685963/>, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4718239/>, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-83471-y>

Stop letting pain get in the way. Give us a call or visit physicaltherapycenter.org today!

Intimidated by the Gym? Try These Tips



While some people struggle to exercise regularly due to pain or busy schedules, many more find themselves holding back for one simple reason: **going to the gym is intimidating.**

At the Physical Therapy Center, we strive to create a welcoming, inclusive environment for all our patients. But we also understand that going to a physical therapy clinic is quite different from going to a gym, where you often have little to no guidance about etiquette, exercise equipment, and more.

Fortunately, our physical therapists can offer a few simple tips for overcoming gym intimidation:

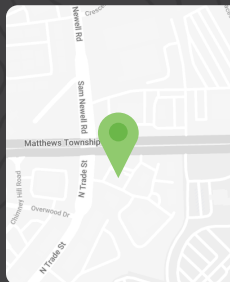
1. Take a few deep breaths. Deep breathing exercises can help calm your nerves before entering the building. Find a quiet space (your car, an empty corner in the locker room) and take five deep, steady breaths before you start your workout.

2. Don't leave your cell phone in your locker. We often see our cell phones as needless distractions—but in the gym, that distraction can help soothe anxiety. One study found that cell phone usage during a workout filters out environmental stressors (like that super-buff guy lifting weights beside you). So consider this permission to load up your favorite podcast and plug in your earbuds!

3. Know before you go. When you walk into a gym, you're met with a maze of cardio and weight machines, free weights, and lots of mirrors. Figuring out a workout program before you step through the doors will help take some of the pressure off. Our physical therapists can help, offering guidance on specific exercises, workout plans, and equipment and gym etiquette instruction.

Gym intimidation is a genuine phenomenon—and the team at the Physical Therapy Center is here to help combat it! Call us today to learn more.

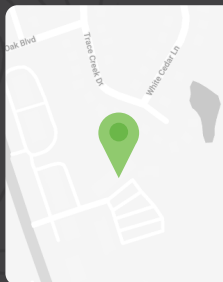
Let's get you better ASAP! Schedule your appointment today!



Matthews Location

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(704) 610-1868

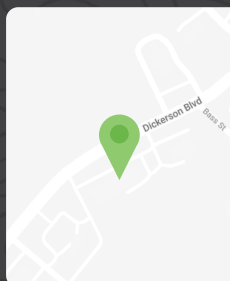
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Waxhaw Location

105 Waxhaw Professional Park Dr
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Monroe Location

1730 Dickerson Blvd
Suite D - Monroe, NC 28110
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Ready to Get Started?

Click here to schedule your next appointment!

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