

Herniated Disc

Diagnosis Explanation:

A **herniated disc** occurs when the **soft inner gel of a spinal disc pushes through the outer layer**, often due to **aging, repetitive stress, or sudden injury**. This can **compress nearby nerves**, leading to **pain, numbness, tingling, or weakness** in the affected area. Common locations include:

- **Cervical spine (neck)** - Pain radiates to the **shoulders, arms, hands (cervical radiculopathy)**.
- **Lumbar spine (lower back)** - Pain radiates to the **buttocks, legs, feet (sciatica)**.

Specific Work Modifications:

- **If your job requires standing or walking:** Use **shock-absorbing shoes**, maintain **good posture**, and take breaks to stretch.
- **If your job involves lifting:** Avoid **heavy lifting, twisting, and bending forward**. Use **proper lifting techniques** and consider a **back brace**.
- **If your job is desk-based:** Use an **ergonomic chair**, keep **feet flat on the floor**, and take breaks **every 30-60 minutes** to walk and stretch.
- **Avoid:** Prolonged sitting or standing, repetitive bending, and sudden twisting movements.

Specific Activity Modifications:

- **If you run or play sports:** Avoid **high-impact activities** and switch to **swimming, cycling, or walking on soft surfaces**.
- **If you hike:** Use **trekking poles**, avoid steep inclines, and carry **lightweight gear** to reduce spinal strain.
- **If you do weightlifting:** Avoid **deadlifts, squats, overhead pressing, and heavy lifting**; focus on **core stability exercises**.
- **Avoid:** High-impact sports, deep spinal flexion (bending forward), and activities that worsen symptoms.

Recommended Supplements:

- **Collagen Peptides** - 10g daily to support disc and ligament repair.
- **Glucosamine & Chondroitin** - 1500mg/1200mg daily for joint and disc health.
- **Omega-3 Fatty Acids** - 1000mg daily to reduce inflammation.
- **Vitamin D3 + Calcium** - 1000 IU/500mg daily for bone support.
- **Magnesium** - 300-400mg daily for muscle relaxation and nerve health.

Recommended Nutrition and Hydration:

- **Eat Anti-Inflammatory Foods** (salmon, leafy greens, turmeric, berries, nuts) to reduce swelling.
- **Increase Lean Protein** (chicken, fish, tofu, eggs) to support muscle and connective tissue repair.
- **Consume Hydrating Foods** (cucumber, watermelon, citrus) to maintain disc hydration.
- **Limit Processed Foods & Sugars** to prevent inflammation.
- **Hydration:** Drink **8-10 cups of water daily** to keep spinal discs hydrated and prevent stiffness.

Home Exercise Prescription (Rehabilitation for Herniated Disc)

Early Phase (0-2 Weeks, Reducing Pain & Stiffness):

- **Pelvic Tilts** - Lie on back, flatten lower back against the floor, hold **5 seconds**, repeat **10 reps, 2x/day**.
- **Cat-Cow Stretch** - On hands and knees, arch and round back, repeat **10 reps, 2x/day**.
- **Chin Tucks (For Cervical Disc Herniation)** - Tuck chin straight back, hold **5 seconds**, repeat **10 reps, 3x/day**.
- **Standing Back Extensions (For Lumbar Disc Herniation)** - Hands on lower back, gently lean backward, hold **5 seconds**, repeat **10 reps, 2x/day**.

Strengthening Phase (2-6 Weeks, Improving Core & Spine Stability):

- **Bridges** - Lie on back, lift hips while engaging core, **10 reps, 2x/day**.
- **Seated Rows (With Resistance Band)** - Pull band toward chest while keeping back straight, **10 reps, 2x/day**.
- **Bird Dog Exercise** - On hands and knees, extend opposite arm and leg, hold **5 seconds**, repeat **10 reps, 2x/day**.

Advanced Phase (6+ Weeks, Enhancing Stability & Preventing Recurrence):

- **Side Planks (Modified if Needed)** - Hold for **10-20 seconds**, increase gradually.
- **Gentle Yoga (Disc-Friendly Poses)** - Child's pose, spinal twists, and standing forward bends.
- **Stationary Cycling or Swimming** - **15-20 minutes/day** for low-impact strengthening.

Helpful Books:

1. *Treat Your Own Back* - Robin McKenzie (self-care exercises for disc health).
2. *The End of Back Pain: Access Your Hidden Core to Heal Your Body* - Dr. Patrick Roth.

Click here for more orthopedic patient information.

Contact a Key West orthopedic clinic or reach out to Dr. Jason Pirozzolo.