



How are Back Problems Evaluated?

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Bone Scans – These are useful in revealing certain abnormalities such as infections, fractures, tumors and arthritis. Because bone scans cannot differentiate between these problems, they are usually performed in conjunction with other diagnostic tests.

How Long is the Hospital Stay?

After surgery, you are encouraged to walk as soon as you recover from anesthesia. Once safe mobility is confirmed, you will be discharged to home. This usually occurs the same day of surgery, or within 24 hours.

How Long Will it Take to Recover?

Recovery after a microdiscectomy varies depending on your particular situation. However, recovery from microdiscectomy surgery is faster because there is minimal soft tissue damage and the mechanics of the spine are not affected. You can quickly return to normal activity provided you use good body mechanics and regain adequate trunk strength. During the early healing phase, you should avoid bending, lifting, twisting and prolonged sitting. If you work in an office you should be able to return to work in 2-4 weeks. If your job requires heavy physical work, you may not be able to return for up to 3 months.

What if I Have Other Questions?

Just give us a call. We'll be happy to answer any of your questions. We are committed to providing you with the highest quality of comprehensive care. If you have suggestions or comments, do not hesitate to let us know.

Center for Spine Health

A destination for comprehensive, quality spine care

18035 Brookhurst St.
Fountain Valley, CA 92708

714-861-4830

Memorialcare.org/OCSpineHealth

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Lumbar Microdiscectomy



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Lower Back Pain

The lower back area is also called the lumbar spine. The discs are the shock absorbing cushions in between each of the lumbar vertebrae. Discs can become injured or worn resulting in a herniation. Sometimes, people refer to this as a slipped or ruptured disc. When this happens, the result can be back and/or leg pain.

When the damaged disc puts pressure on the spinal nerve, this can produce pain that travels to your leg. This pressure on the nerve may cause pain, numbness and/or weakness in the leg. This is sometimes called “sciatica.” Sciatica is usually felt as a sharp, shooting pain through the buttock, down the back of the leg and into the foot.

What is a Lumbar Microdiscectomy?

During a lumbar microdiscectomy, the surgeon makes a 1-2 inch incision and uses a microscope or loupes along with microsurgical techniques to remove the part of the disc that is putting pressure on the spinal nerve. This minimally invasive technique spares the bones, muscles, ligaments and surrounding soft tissue from trauma making recovery easier and faster.

Who is a Candidate for Microdiscectomy?

Less than 10% of patients with disc herniations require surgery. Most of these conditions can be resolved with conservative care measures. When leg pain does not resolve with conservative care measures, and the ability to perform daily activities is severely restricted, the patient may be a candidate for a microdiscectomy.

What are the Alternatives to a Microdiscectomy?

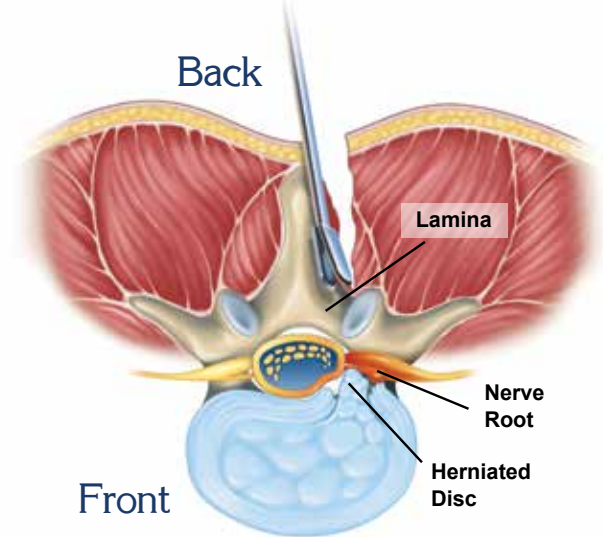
Conservative therapies typically relieve the symptoms resulting from herniated discs. Treatments such as medication, bed rest, steroid injections and physical therapy can be effective and return the majority of patients to normal daily activities.

How are Back Problems Evaluated?

Your doctor will use a number of approaches to evaluate and diagnose back problems such as a herniated disc.

These include:

A Detailed History – Your role in providing a detailed history is very important. Your doctor will need to know where and when it hurts, if there was a recent injury or fall, and a description of the pain. Are there positions or activities that make it feel worse? What makes it feel better? All of these details can help your doctor pinpoint the problem.



A Physical Exam – Once your history is reviewed, a thorough exam by a spine expert is another important step in getting an accurate diagnosis.

Diagnostic Imaging – X-rays can show the structure and alignment of the vertebrae, as well as the presence and size of bone spurs or other bony abnormalities.

MRI or “magnetic resonance imaging” – MRI is generally the most utilized study for back pain evaluation. MRI uses a powerful magnet to send radio waves into the body. The images produced are very helpful in visualizing the soft tissues such as the spinal cord, discs and nerve roots.

CT or “computerized tomography” – This is a special type of X-ray machine. Rather than a single X-ray, a CT scanner sends out a number of beams at different angles. These images are then read by a computer, producing detailed cross-sections or “slices” that can show the shape and size of the spinal canal and the surrounding structures. (continued on flap)