



Medtronic

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Common Spinal Conditions Fact Sheet

Fact Sheet Common Spinal Conditions

While not limited to these conditions, the following are common causes of chronic pain.

- *Facet joint osteoarthritis* is a gradual process that breaks down cartilage between joints. The loss of cartilage causes more friction between the joints, resulting in pain and stiffness. This disorder can also result in compression of nerves, which causes pain as well.
- *Spinal stenosis* is a narrowing of the spinal canal or neural passageways (foramina) that can place pressure on nerves in the spinal cord. Stenosis is a gradual result of aging, and wear and tear on the spine.
- *Degenerative disc disease* is a gradual process that affects the structural integrity of discs. As people age, disc moisture decreases, resulting in discs that may shrink, wrinkle and even crack. These disc changes allow vertebral structures to compress, resulting in less space for nerves to exit the spinal column. The compressed nerves may swell and cause pain.
- *Spondylolisthesis* is a condition where one vertebra slips over another, causing spine misalignment and instability. It may be present at birth and develop over time, or be the result of physical activity or deteriorating spinal parts, such as discs.
- *Disc herniation* is a rupture of the disc where the inner core of the disc bulges out through the outer layer. If the bulging disc presses on a spinal nerve, the pressure can cause pain. A common symptom of a herniated disc is sciatica, the term used to describe pain that travels downward along the sciatic nerve from the buttock to the thigh and leg. Herniated discs are also known as "slipped" or "ruptured" discs.
- *Osteoporosis* is a disorder caused by bone mineral loss that results in fragile bones. This disorder can cause vertebral compression fractures or a humped back.

In addition to these common conditions associated with back pain, there are many other possible causes of chronic pain, including pregnancy, injury, infection and tumors. Pregnancy stresses the back and may contribute to pain that lasts several months, but generally this pain subsides and is not indicative of a chronic condition. In any case,

persistent pain requires that the sufferer seek a more specific and definable problem after a wait-and-see period has elapsed.

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