**Spinal Stenosis**

**What is stenosis?**Spinal stenosis is created by the narrowing of the spinal canal. This narrowing may be caused by mechanical problems or by abnormalities in the aging spine. It may or may not result in low-back pain, limping, and a lack of feeling in the legs.

Stenosis is often a degenerative condition. It may exist for years without causing pain or discomfort, but a fall or an accident can trigger characteristic stenotic pain. Numerous factors can cause stenosis, such as thickened ligaments, expanding infection, abscess, a congenital or developmental anomaly, degenerative changes, vertebral fractures or dislocations, or a spinal cord tumor.

**How is stenosis diagnosed?**  
Spinal stenosis can be diagnosed based on the history of symptoms, a physical examination, and imaging tests. An MRI is a very poor predictor of future disability in stenosis. An electrodiagnostic study is more dependable for information on a stenotic spine. To diagnose stenosis caused by an abscess or an infection, blood work analyzed by a laboratory may be required, while vertebral tumors and spinal tumors require finely tuned imaging.

**How is stenosis treated?**  
There are three basic treatment approaches to spinal stenosis: the conservative medical approach, which frequently involves bed rest, analgesics, local heat, and muscle relaxants; the conservative chiropractic approach, which includes manipulation, exercise and self-care techniques; and surgery. The source of the stenosis often dictates the treatment.

Ultimately, stenosis is a chronic condition that cannot be “cured,” but it often can be improved, and improvement can be maintained over the long term. Patients can work with a health care provider, such as a doctor of chiropractic, to reduce symptoms and improve their quality of life.

**Signs and Symptoms of Stenosis**• Pseudoclaudication—pain triggered by walking or prolonged standing, which is usually improved by sitting in a forward leaning flexed position  
• Numbness, tingling, and hot or cold feelings in the legs  
• Muscle weakness and spasms

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