

About Herniated Discs

OVERVIEW

The nerves leaving the lumbar region join together to form the sciatic nerve, which travels through the hip. When this nerve is pinched by a herniated disc, a painful burning, tingling and/or numbing sensation may be felt from the lower back to the foot or feet.

THE NORMAL DISC

The bony vertebrae of the spinal column are separated from one another by pads of tough cartilage called intervertebral discs. The discs act as shock absorbers, allowing for pain-free motion of the spine. Structurally, the disc is composed of two main parts. The inner nucleus (nucleus pulposus) and outer wall (annulus fibrosus).

THE HERNIATED DISC

The wear of normal aging and/or trauma can cause injury to the disc. The soft nucleus hardens and breaks apart. The annulus weakens and forms small tears. A disc herniates when damaged pieces of nucleus rupture through a tear in the annulus. The herniated disc often pinches (compresses) a local nerve root.

