

Spine Health: Spinal Stenosis

What is lumbar spinal stenosis?

Lumbar spinal stenosis is narrowing of the spinal or foraminal canal (lateral recess) in the lower back (see picture below), known as the lumbar area. This narrowing occurs when the growth of bone, or tissue, or both reduces the size of the openings through which the spinal cord or nerve(s) travel. This narrowing can squeeze and irritate the nerves that branch out from the spinal cord and/or it can squeeze and irritate the spinal cord itself.

What causes lumbar spinal stenosis?

Lumbar spinal stenosis is most often caused by changes in the shape and size of the spinal and /or foraminal canal as people age by, for example; 1) the thickening of connective tissues called ligaments, 2) degenerative joint disease, called osteoarthritis, leading to the growth of bone spurs that push on the spinal cord and/or nerve roots, 3) discs between the bones may be pushed into the spinal and/or foraminal canal. Any of these conditions or any combination of these conditions can lead to problems that narrow the space in the spinal and/or foraminal canal(s).

What are the symptoms?

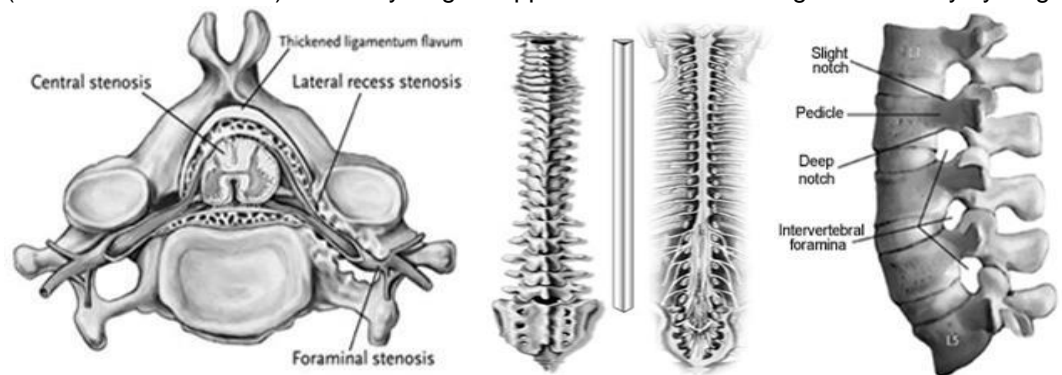
Symptoms may include: Low back pain, pain in the legs, feet, or buttocks, numbness, weakness, cramping, and, in severe cases, loss of bladder and bowel function. These symptoms get worse when you walk, stand straight, or lean backward. The pain commonly gets better when you sit down or lean forward. Walking with a walker or shopping cart usually allows for improved walking abilities and reduced symptoms.

What are the treatment options?

There is a lot of research indicating the best courses of treatment. For mild to moderate symptoms Physical Therapy, exercise and medication are the treatments of choice. Your doctors may additionally decide that a spinal (epidural or facet) injection of corticosteroids, a medicine that reduces inflammation, can assist in symptom relieve. Surgery is the option if your symptoms continue to get worse or if they limit what you can do. In these cases, surgery to remove the bone and tissue that are squeezing the spinal cord and/or nerve root can help relieve leg pain and allow you to get back to normal activity.

What Physical Therapy interventions work best?

Physical Therapy has been shown to work best when it includes manual (hands-on) therapy, exercises addressing the Physical Therapist identified specific dysfunctions, traction (mechanical or manual) and bodyweight supported treadmill training or stationary cycling.



- Pool Therapy
- Orthopedic Rehabilitation
 - Back and Neck
 - Pre / Post Surgical
 - Total Joint Replacement
 - Sprains / Strains
 - Arthritis
- Vestibular / Dizziness Rehabilitation
- Neurologic Rehabilitation
- Fall Prevention & Balance Training
- Reconditioning / Wellness
- TMJ Rehabilitation
- Chronic Pain Rehabilitation

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