



# Herniated Discs: Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment Options

## What is a Herniated Disc?

Understanding the root cause of back pain and neck pain is essential for effectively treating it. At Desert Spine and Sports Physicians, we take a holistic approach to [managing spine pain](#), using comprehensive diagnostic measures and prioritizing non-surgical treatments that enhance functionality. One of the most common causes of spine pain we see comes from herniated discs.

Your spine consists of vertebrae cushioned by specialized discs that act as shock absorbers. These discs have a tough outer layer (annulus) and a soft, gel-like center (nucleus). When a disc herniates, the inner material pushes through a tear in the outer layer, similar to a jelly donut being squeezed until its filling leaks out.

Common causes of herniated discs include:

- Age-related disc degeneration
- Improper lifting techniques
- Sudden traumatic injury
- Repetitive strenuous activities
- Obesity
- Genetic predisposition

## Symptoms of a Herniated Disc

The location and severity of symptoms depend on which disc is affected and how much it's pressing on nearby nerves.

Common symptoms include:

- Sharp, shooting pain that may radiate down arms or legs
- Reduced range of motion in the spine
- Numbness or tingling in extremities
- Pain that worsens with certain movements
- Muscle weakness

These symptoms can significantly impact daily activities, from work performance to sleep quality. You may experience sharp twinges from leaning over while getting dressed or notice you're unable to fully turn your neck while driving. While living with the pain of a herniated disc is difficult, it is the limitations the condition places on your day-to-day living that can be exceptionally difficult to tolerate.

Our specialists are here to change that reality.

## Diagnosing a Herniated Disc

We believe your diagnosis should guide your treatment, so this is an essential first step toward healing. We utilize several diagnostic tools to accurately identify and assess herniated discs, including:

- A detailed medical history and comprehensive [physical examination](#) including neurological and musculoskeletal evaluations
- Initial X-rays can help evaluate disc spaces, bone spurs, and fractures
- Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) provides detailed images of the spine and particularly soft tissues like discs and nerves
- CT scans may be used when MRI is contraindicated or in some cases where it is necessary to see detailed bony anatomy

When a herniated disc presses on a nerve, it can be a [cause of radiculopathy or sciatica](#). If this is the case for you, we can pursue additional testing and treatments as warranted.

# Non-Surgical Treatment Options for Herniated Discs

We typically treat pain from herniated discs using a combination of individualized physical therapy planning, targeted [spine injections](#) (when necessary), and non-opiate medications including neuropathic medications used to treat nerve pain.

## Spine Injections

The providers at Desert Spine and Sports Physicians are experts in performing [epidural steroid injections](#) for radiculopathy from herniated discs:

- Performed under fluoroscopic or x-ray guidance for precise placement
- Reduces inflammation around affected nerves
- Provides significant pain relief
- Allows patients to participate more effectively in physical therapy and exercise program
- Often eliminates the need for surgery

## Physical Therapy

We collaborate with physical therapy specialists in our community to ensure you can access comprehensive healing. Your customized physical therapy plan may include exercises to:

- Improve hip and lower extremity flexibility
- Strengthen core muscles
- Enhance body mechanics
- Correct posture

## Preventing Future Disc Injuries

Our goal in working with patients is to both treat and manage your symptoms while preventing future issues—ensuring you can live the active life you want. To help prevent future disc injuries, consider what lifestyle factors may have contributed to the injury in the first place and make adjustments where possible. We suggest:

- Working on core strengthening
- Keeping up with lower extremity flexibility exercises
- Paying attention to your posture, especially when sitting for a long time or lifting something
- Implementing ergonomic workstation improvements
- Keeping your weight at a healthy level with good nutrition and regular exercise

## Preventing Future Disc Injuries

At Desert Spine and Sports Physicians, our board-certified and fellowship-trained physicians combine evidence-based treatment protocols with state-of-the-art diagnostics to deliver exceptional [care for herniated disc patients](#). Our comprehensive approach emphasizes individualized treatment plans that address the whole person, focusing on both immediate pain relief and long-term recovery. Don't let a herniated disc control your life—our team is ready to help you return to the activities you love, often more functionally than before your injury.

## Request Appointment

Suffering from herniated discs, or other conditions that limit your mobility and diminish your quality of life?

The expert team at Desert Spine and Sports Physicians can help.

We offer advanced treatments for spine pain, musculoskeletal injuries and joint arthritis, and develop innovative, comprehensive therapy plans for patients to reduce pain and improve function.

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