

What is Spinal Stenosis?

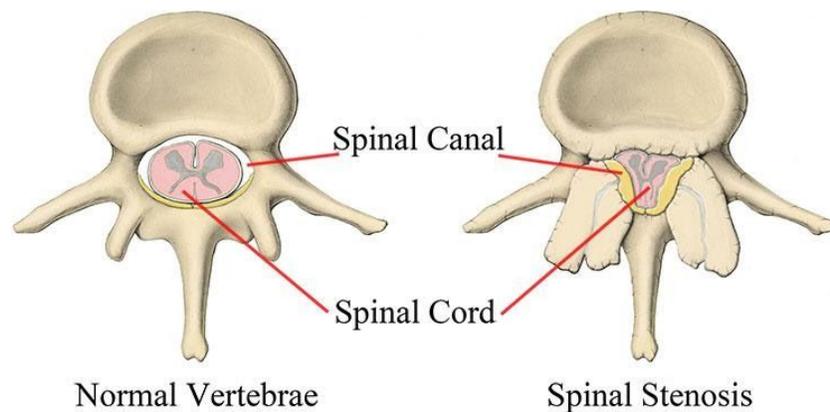
Definition

- Stenosis = narrowing of an open space
- Spinal Stenosis refers specifically to the narrowing of spinal openings
 - Spinal canal (opening for spinal cord)
 - Neuroforamen (opening for nerve roots)

Spinal stenosis is a condition where your spinal canal or neuroforamen gets narrower. This can occur anywhere along the spinal column, however, it is mostly seen in the cervical (neck) and lumbar spine (lower back). It can be due to the effects of degenerative conditions like osteoarthritis and degenerative disc disease.

These conditions lead to increases in pressure between the vertebrae that make up your spine. More weight goes on the facet joints in your spine, which causes the spinal canal to narrow. The facet joints themselves deteriorate, and your body tries to support your spine by producing osteophytes (bone spurs).

The ligaments supporting your spine can also start to thicken, and together with the bone spurs cause further narrowing. The result is that the space left for your spinal cord and the nerves coming off it becomes so narrow the nerves suffer from compression that causes the symptoms of spinal stenosis.



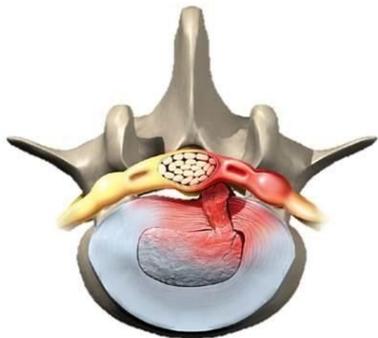
What are the symptoms of spinal stenosis?

Common symptoms involve pain, numbness or tingling, and weakness in the affected muscle group innervated by the nerve region that is compressed. If the spinal cord is compressed this is referred to as myelopathy, and usually occurs in the cervical spine. If a nerve root is compressed this is referred to as radiculopathy.

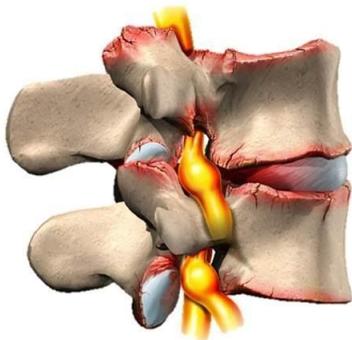
If you have spinal stenosis in the lumbar spine, you're likely to experience symptoms of neurogenic claudication, which include lower back pain, pain in one or both legs, and pain in your hips and buttocks. You might also feel tingling sensations or cramping in these areas, and a feeling of heaviness or weakness in your legs.

Symptoms of spinal stenosis are often worse when you move, then get better when you sit down, particularly if you lean forward.

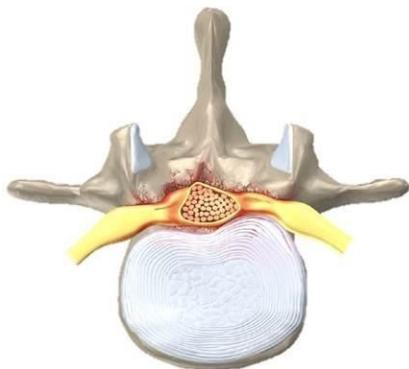
Types of spinal stenosis



Central Stenosis
Narrowing of the central spinal canal



Foraminal Stenosis
Narrowing of the intervertebral foramen



Lateral Recess Stenosis
Narrowing of the space within the spinal canal adjacent to the exit zone of the nerve root

What treatments are there for spinal stenosis?

Many times spinal stenosis can be treated with conservative treatment approaches, such as:

- Physical therapy
- Massage
- Anti-inflammatory medications
- Steroid injections
- Acupuncture

However, if the disease process is too far advanced, the above mentioned conservative measures are not providing relief, or there are neurological symptoms such as numbness or weakness then surgery may be indicated.

What are the surgical options for spinal stenosis?

The type of surgery for spinal stenosis is dependent on the severity of symptoms and if there are other spinal problems present in conjunction with stenosis. The main goal of treating spinal stenosis is by decompressing the neural elements which is through performing a laminectomy.

During a laminectomy procedure, a portion of the spine known as the lamina is removed and the involved bone spurs, thickened ligaments, and other tissues that are putting pressure on your spinal canal or nerves are removed. This can be achieved many times through minimally invasive techniques.

If there's spinal instability present or arthritis of the facet joints a fusion may need to be performed in conjunction with a laminectomy to treat the symptoms. If you're experiencing symptoms of spinal stenosis, please call our clinic today or book an appointment online.