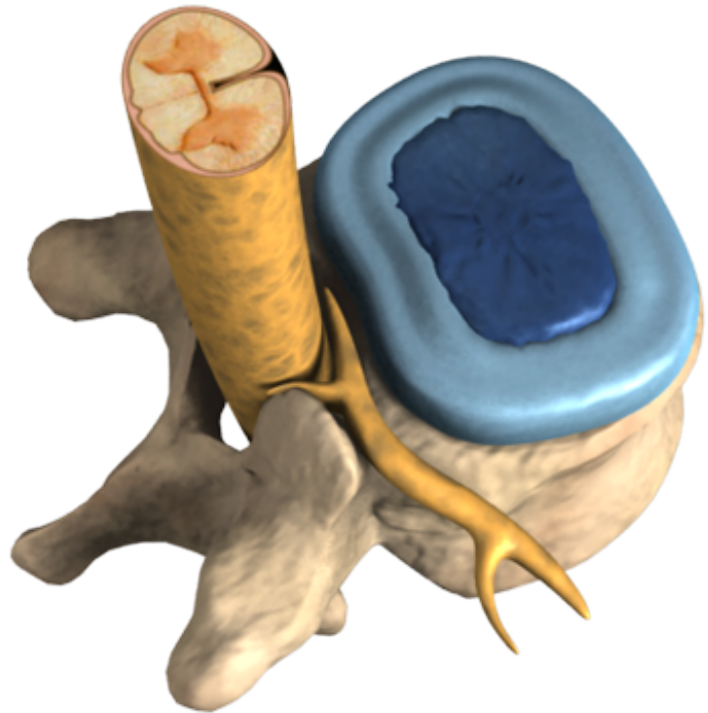
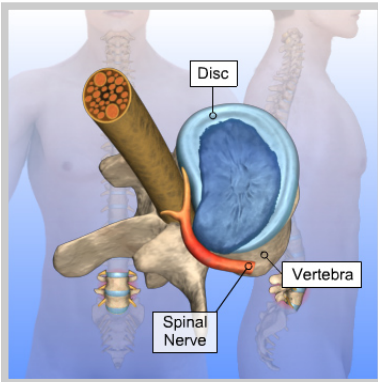


Herniated Disc - Lumbar

A lumbar disc herniation, or lumbar radiculopathy, occurs when a small portion of a disc ruptures and causes pressure on spinal nerves. Small herniations are sometimes called bulges or protrusions, and people experiencing pain from the herniation often describe it as a pinched nerve.





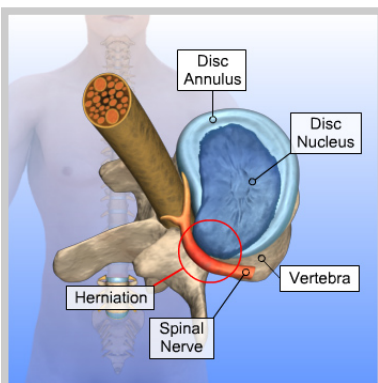
Introduction

A lumbar disc herniation, or lumbar radiculopathy, occurs when a small portion of a disc ruptures and causes pressure on spinal nerves. Small herniations are sometimes called bulges or protrusions, and people experiencing pain from the herniation often describe it as a pinched nerve.



Symptoms

In general, pressure on a spinal nerve from a lumbar herniation causes discomfort in one or both of the legs, frequently down to the ankle or foot. There can be shooting pains, weakness, and/or numbness. Pain in the leg is usually worse when sitting.



Causes

Lumbar disc herniations are most frequently caused by degeneration due to the normal aging process. As small tears in the disc's outer layer (annulus) develop and enlarge over time, the jellylike inner layer (nucleus) may bulge outward, causing pressure on the spinal cord and nerves. Occasionally, trauma or an episode of heavy lifting causes sudden rupture of the disc resulting in symptoms. Sudden twisting, such as when golfing, can also cause lumbar disc herniations.



Summary

Lower back and leg pain from a disc herniation can often be resolved with medication and non-operative treatments (physical therapy). When these treatments are successful, leg pain tends to disappear first and it may take longer for weakness or numbness to improve. Surgery is performed for those whose symptoms do not improve.