

Patient Information Leaflet: Spinal Disc Herniation and Its Management

A spinal disc herniation, sometimes called a slipped or ruptured disc, occurs when the soft inner part of a spinal disc pushes out through a tear in the tougher outer layer. This can irritate or compress nearby nerves, leading to symptoms such as back or neck pain, numbness, tingling, muscle weakness, or pain that radiates into the arms or legs. In most cases, herniated discs occur in the lower back (lumbar spine) or neck (cervical spine).

Management Options

Most herniated discs improve with conservative treatment. This includes rest, physical therapy, pain medications, and sometimes steroid injections to reduce inflammation. These approaches aim to relieve pain and improve function, and many people recover without surgery.

Surgical Treatments

If symptoms are severe, persistent, or involve nerve damage (such as significant weakness or loss of bladder/bowel control), surgery may be recommended.

Cervical Disc Herniation: ACDF

For herniated discs in the neck, a common procedure is Anterior Cervical Discectomy and Fusion (ACDF). In this surgery, the damaged disc is removed through a small incision at the front of the neck. The space is then filled with a bone graft or spacer, and sometimes a small plate is added for stability. This helps relieve pressure on the nerves and stabilizes the spine.

Lumbar Disc Herniation: Discectomy

For herniated discs in the lower back, a lumbar discectomy may be performed. The surgeon removes the portion of the disc pressing on the nerve. This can be done as an open surgery, through a larger incision, or using minimally invasive surgery (MIS) techniques, which use smaller incisions and specialized instruments. Endoscopic discectomy is the least invasive option, using a tiny camera and instruments inserted through a very small incision, often allowing for faster recovery and less pain after surgery.

Your surgeon will discuss the best approach for your specific condition. Dr Nektarios Mazarakis has expertise in all these techniques, including open, minimally invasive, and endoscopic spinal surgeries, offering tailored treatment for each patient.

