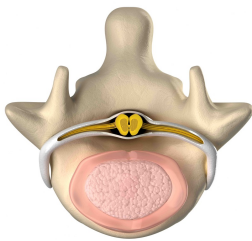




# ABOUT STENOSIS

08/21/2022

## WHAT'S WRONG?



### Lumbar Stenosis

The term stenosis means "narrowing" of a tube or opening. Spinal stenosis means that the tube surrounding your spinal cord and nerve roots has become too small, and your nerves are being compressed. Stenosis can arise in different ways. Sometimes, people are born with a spinal canal that is too small. Other times, the canal may have been narrowed by surgery or conditions like disc bulges. Most commonly, spinal stenosis arises from chronic arthritic changes that narrow the canal. This type of stenosis usually develops slowly over a long period of time, and

symptoms show up later in life.

Patients with stenosis often report pain, tingling, numbness, or weakness in their legs. Lower back pain may or may not be present, but leg symptoms are usually more bothersome. You may notice increasing symptoms from standing or walking and relief while sitting because the available space in your spinal canal decreases when you stand, walk or lean back and increases when you sit or flex forward. Walking downhill is usually more uncomfortable than walking uphill. You may notice that when you walk with a shopping cart or lawnmower, you are more comfortable, as this promotes slight flexion. Sleeping on your side in a fetal position with a pillow between your knees may be most comfortable.

The natural course of spinal stenosis is variable. Most patients notice their symptoms stay about the same over time, while others are divided into fairly equal groups who either improve or worsen. Be sure to tell your provider if you notice that your legs become cold, swollen, or change color. Likewise, tell us if you notice a fever, unexplained weight loss, flu-like symptoms, excessive thirst or urination, numbness in your groin, or loss of bladder control.

While there is no non-surgical cure for stenosis, we offer potent treatments to help ease your symptoms. Treatment is focused on helping improve your mobility so that you can walk and function better. You will be given exercises to help with conditioning. You should avoid activities that increase your pain, including heavy lifting or those that cause you to extend your back, like prolonged standing or overhead activity. When you are forced to stand, you may find relief by slightly elevating one foot on a stool or bar rail. You may find relief while washing dishes if you open your cabinet door and alternately rest one foot on the inside of the cabinet to provide a little bit of flexion. Recumbent cycling is often a more tolerable alternative to walking or running. Some patients report relief by using an inversion table.



### **Joint Manipulation**

Your provider has found joints in your body that are not moving freely. This can cause tightness and discomfort and can accelerate unwanted degeneration i.e. arthritis. Your provider will apply a gentle force with their hands, or with handheld instruments, in order to restore motion to any "restricted" joints. Sometimes a specialized table will be used to assist with these safe and effective "adjustments". Joint manipulation improves flexibility, relieves pain, and helps maintain healthy joints.



### **Therapy Modalities**

We may apply electrotherapy modalities that produce light electrical pulses transmitted through electrodes placed over your specific sites of concern. These comfortable modalities work to decrease your pain, limit inflammation and ease muscle spasms. Hot or cold packs are often used in conjunction, to enhance the effect of these modalities.

Another available option is therapeutic ultrasound. Ultrasound pushes sound vibrations into tissues. When these vibrations reach your deep tissues, heat develops, and unwanted waste products are dispersed.



### **Myofascial Release**

Overworked muscles often become tight and develop knots or "trigger points". Chronic tightness produces inflammation and swelling that ultimately leads to the formation of "adhesions" between tissues. Your provider will apply pressure with their hands, or with specialized tools, in order to release muscle tightness and soft-tissue adhesions. This will help to improve your circulation, relieve pain and restore flexibility.



### **Therapeutic Exercise**

Muscle tightness or weakness causes discomfort and alters normal joint function, leading to additional problems. Your chiropractor will target tight or weak muscles with specific therapeutic stretching and strengthening to help increase tissue flexibility, build strength, and ease the pain. Healthy, strong, and flexible muscles may help prevent re-injury.

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### Sleep Posture

Your mattress and the position you sleep in may affect your condition.

- Choose a mattress that provides medium or firm support, such as a traditional coil spring or adjustable airbed. Avoid waterbeds, thick pillow tops, and soft, sagging mattresses.
- Keep your neck and back covered while sleeping to avoid drafts that could cause potential muscle spasms.
- Since each presentation is unique with endless variability, there is no one-size-fits-all sleeping position. Research suggests that the *optimal* sleep position is the one that allows you to rest most comfortably without after-effects. Finding your ideal sleep position usually takes some experimentation, but two of the most popular are sleeping on your side with a pillow between your knees, or on your back with a pillow either underneath your knees.
- While many patients with neck pain or low back pain will want to avoid sleeping on their stomach, some people, particularly younger patients with sciatica, might find stomach sleeping is most comfortable.
- If possible, progressively test to see if your symptoms increase or decrease before spending a full night in any new position.



### Lifting Mechanics

Here are some tips to help you lift safely:

- Avoid lifting or flexing before you've had the chance to warm up your muscles (especially when you first awaken or after sitting or stooping for a period of time).
- To lift, stand close directly facing the object with your feet shoulder-width apart.
- Squat down by bending with your knees, not your back. Imagine a fluorescent light tube strapped to your head and hips when bending. Don't "break" the tube with improper movements. Tuck your chin to help keep your spine aligned.
- Slowly lift by thrusting your hips forward while straightening your legs.
- Keep the object close to your body, within your power zone, between your hips and chest. Do not twist your body, if you must turn while carrying an object, reposition your feet, not your torso.

An alternative lifting technique for smaller objects is the golfer's lift. Swing one leg directly behind you. Keep your back straight while your body leans forward. Placing one hand on your thigh or a sturdy object may help.



## Standing

To avoid extra stress on your spine while standing:

- Avoid high-heeled shoes or boots.
- Use a footrest measuring 10% of your height.
- To decrease stress on your back and feet consider leaning on a tall chair.
- If excessive standing can't be avoided, consider shock-absorbent shoes or an anti-fatigue mat.
- When transitioning from a sitting workstation to a standing desk, begin gradually by standing 20 minutes per hour and not necessarily in a continuous period. Add an extra 10 minutes per hour each day as long as there is no prolonged stiffness or discomfort.

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## EXERCISES AT HOME

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The following exercises have been specifically selected to assist with your recovery and help minimize future problems. Exercises should be performed slowly and within a relatively comfortable range. Maintain good posture and breathe naturally. Do not hold your breath. Unless otherwise instructed, stop any exercises that cause pain, or radiating symptoms.



### Hamstring Doorway Stretch

Perform 1 set of 3 contract/relax cycles, 2 times per day

on each side

Lie flat on your back with your leg elevated and positioned in a doorway as shown. "Scoot" toward the doorframe until your hamstring is taut. Contract your hamstring by attempting to push your heel into the doorframe for seven seconds. Relax and gently slide your buttocks toward the doorframe while keeping your knees straight to increase the stretch. Repeat three contract/relax cycles on each side, twice per day or as directed. Alternately, you may provide your own resistance by looping a belt or towel around your heel instead of using a doorframe.



### Sciatic Nerve Floss - S/L

Perform 2 sets of 10 reps, 2 times per day

Begin lying on your unaffected with your spine in a neutral position. Slowly flex your hip to bring your straightened leg in front of you until you feel a stretch in the back of your leg or buttock. Do not move into a position that reproduces sharp or radiating pain. At the same time that you are moving your leg forward, extend your head to look at the wall behind you. (as to nod "yes.") Return to the start position. Perform two sets of 10 repetitions twice per day or as directed.



### Mad Cat/Old Horse

Perform 3 sets of 20 reps, 2 times per day

Begin on all 4's with your hands under your shoulders and your knees under your hips. Extend your back upward into a "mad cat" position. Next, flex your back downward to sag into an "old horse" position. Slowly transition back and forth between these two positions. Repeat in a slow coordinated movement as directed.



### Knee to Chest

Perform 1 set of 1 rep, 2 times per day

Lie flat on your back with both legs extended. With the assistance of your arms, bring your right knee to your chest and hold it there for 30 seconds. Slowly return to neutral and repeat on the left side for 30 seconds. Finish by bringing both knees to your chest for 60 seconds. Perform as directed.



### Seated Lumbar Flexion

Perform 1 set of 10 seconds, 3 times per day

Begin sitting on the edge of a stable (non-rolling) chair with your feet shoulder width apart. Flex forward to allow your arms, shoulders, and head to drop between your knees. As you breathe out, slowly "let go" to increase the stretch with each respiration. To increase the stretch, grasp your thighs and pull down further. Maintain this stretch position for 10-30 seconds or as directed. Slowly return to an upright position, using your arms, if necessary, to "walk up" your legs. Perform this stretch three to eight times per day or as directed.