

## Herniated Discs

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One of the most dramatic injuries you can sustain to your lumbar spine is a herniated disc. When you have a herniated disc, a tear in the annular ligament allows the nucleus pulposus to squeeze your spinal canal. If the disc material compresses your nerve root, you may suffer pain, numbness, and weakness in the area supplied by the nerve. In a very few cases, disc herniation can become so big that it fills the entire spinal canal. This immediate pressure on the nerves in your spine may cause paralysis of the muscles that control your bowels and bladder. If this occurs, you should contact a doctor immediately.

In most cases, surgery is required to remove a herniated disc in order to relieve pressure on the nerve roots. This procedure is called a discectomy. First, a portion of the lamina, or the portion of the vertebra that forms the roof over the spinal nerves, is removed. This creates a window into your spine, which then allows the nerves to be pulled to the side so the herniated disc can be seen. Once the disc material is removed, most of the nucleus pulposus is removed to prevent the disc from herniating again. Also, the nerves in your back become free of pressure and irritation, and the lamina and area of the disc that is removed fills with scar tissue very quickly.