

# EXERCISING WITH BACK PAIN

Exercising with low back pain can be challenging, but it's important for pain management and overall health. Learn tips and exercises to safely incorporate physical activity into your routine.



## DID YOU KNOW...

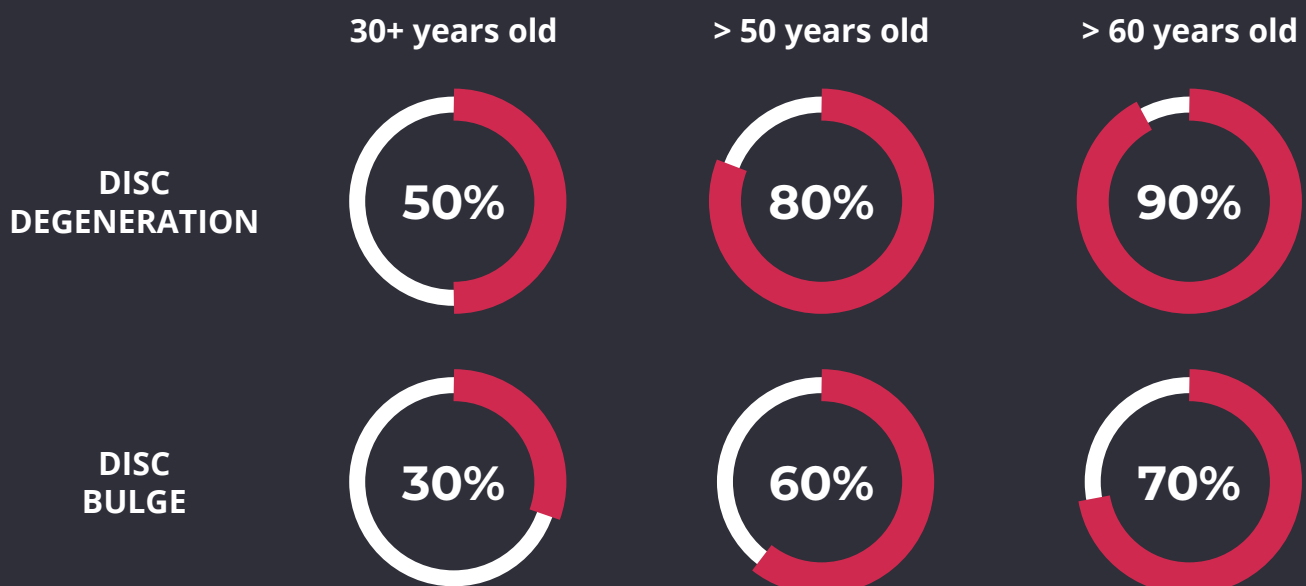
Findings on an MRI are common for people **with or without pain.**

Imaging is **not required** prior to Physical Therapy.

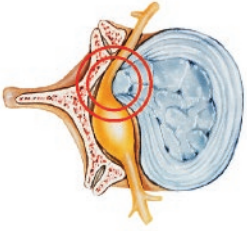
Exception: Loss of strength, or impairment of bowel or bladder function.

X-rays and MRIs **should be paired with clinical evaluation** when determining treatments.

## A 2018 STUDY OF SYMPTOM-FREE ADULTS FOUND



# DISC HERNIATION



Disc herniation occurs when the **soft cushion-like material between the vertebrae in your spine bulges or ruptures**, pressing on nearby nerves and causing pain or weakness. It's a common cause of back and leg pain, and can result from injury or wear and tear over time.



## TREATMENT OPTIONS

### PHYSICAL THERAPY

- Focus on upright postures that limit bending forces.

### ANTI-INFLAMMATORIES

- OTC or prescribed to reduce pain.

### ORAL STEROIDS

- Typically a 6-day course of steroids stronger than anti-inflammatories.

### INJECTIONS

- Epidural steroid injection often used for diagnosis or pain relief prior to surgery.

### SURGERY

- Discectomy is a common outpatient procedure used to reduce disc herniation. The recovery time can vary based on patient goals.



### BETTER WITH

Standing, walking,  
being on the stomach



### WORSE WITH

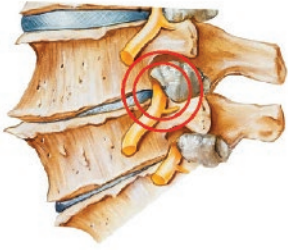
Sitting, bending, putting  
on socks/shoes



### EXERCISE CONSIDERATIONS

Prioritize standing over  
seated exercises

# DEGENERATIVE DISC DISEASE/STENOSIS



Degenerative disc disease is when **the cushions between the bones in your spine start to wear out and break down**. This can cause pain and discomfort, and make it harder to move your back. It can also cause stiffness and weakness in the affected area.

## TREATMENT OPTIONS

### PHYSICAL THERAPY

- Focus on mobility in the hips and mid-back while maximizing strength in the core and legs.

### PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS

- OTC anti-inflammatories are not typically effective — discuss any medications with your primary care physician.

### INJECTIONS

- Steroid injections can be both diagnostic and therapeutic.

### SURGERY

- Often a last resort with varying degrees of invasiveness.



### BETTER WITH

Sitting, bending forward



### WORSE WITH

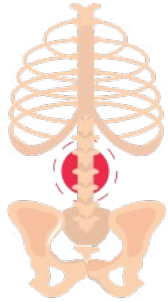
Standing, walking, bending backward



### EXERCISE CONSIDERATIONS

Seated exercises, free weights

# WEAKNESS



Weakness can make you apprehensive to bend down or lift objects. Frequent changes to your position may be required, and you may need assistance standing up or climbing stairs.

## TREATMENT OPTIONS

- Restoring strength in the core, legs, and upper body.
- Exercises need to be challenging enough to create change, but not so difficult that they over-stress the spine.
- If not treated, weakness can lead to accelerated aging and recurring back pain.



### BETTER WITH

Changing positions,  
moving, walking



### WORSE WITH

Lifting, bending, staying in one  
position too long, rolling in bed



### EXERCISE CONSIDERATIONS

Depending on your level of involvement, exercises will progress from easier to more difficult positions.

**Try practicing:**

LAYING DOWN → HANDS & KNEES → STANDING