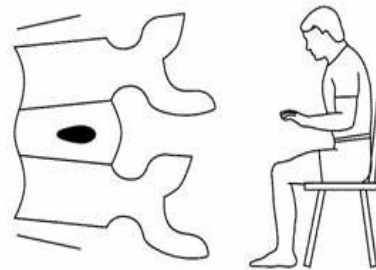


# ACUTE LUMBAR DISC

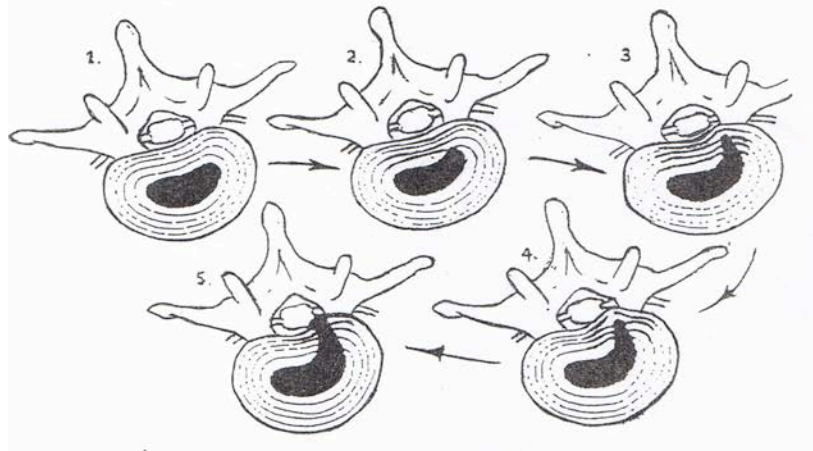
Disc bulge or “slipped disc” is a condition that relates to the spine. It can be caused by immediate trauma or injury as well as long term trauma (improper posture). Discs are located between each of the vertebral bodies of the spine. The discs are the shock absorbers of the body. They also help to give the spine more movement and flexibility as we twist and bend.

The discs have an outer component called the annulus. The annulus is cartilage, which is tough, and it is layered like onion peels. At the centre of the disc is the nucleus which is a watery, gelatine-like centre. In general, the discs have a high content of water and this is what makes them flexible. As we age the disc loses water and becomes more brittle and weaker.

As we participate in activities that place us in a bent or “flexed” position (sitting, driving etc.), pressure from the nucleus can be exerted on the back side of the discs’ annulus. Over time, one layer at a time of the outer ring splits or cracks and the gelatinous centre moves closer to the outside. Eventually this nucleus begins to distort the shape of the disc causing the disc to bulge. This can happen to the direct backside but most often is slightly to one side or the other.



The pain is caused because the back side of the disc has many nerves. Another factor is that the spinal cord is directly behind the disc and as the bulge increases, it begins to irritate the nerves that are attached to the spinal cord. In most cases the irritation is purely due to pain chemicals that bath the nerve but in rare cases the nerve can be compressed. The nerves of the low back travel down the leg which can cause feelings of pain as far down as the foot and toes, as well as numbness or tingling in the leg and foot.



## What you should do in the first 5 days

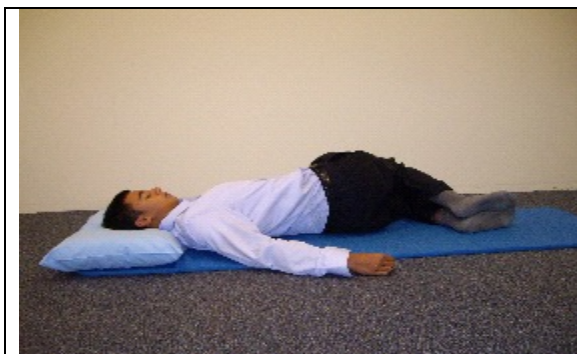
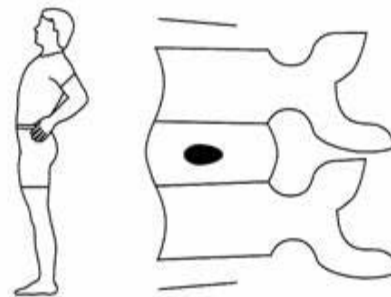
### DO:

- Try to lie as flat as possible. Alternate between lying on your stomach and your back depending on how you find it comfortable.
- Perform 10 of the passive extension exercises shown to you by your physiotherapist EVERY 2 hours. If you have also been shown list correction exercises, perform these with the same frequency.
- Take any medication prescribed to you by your GP.

### DO NOT:

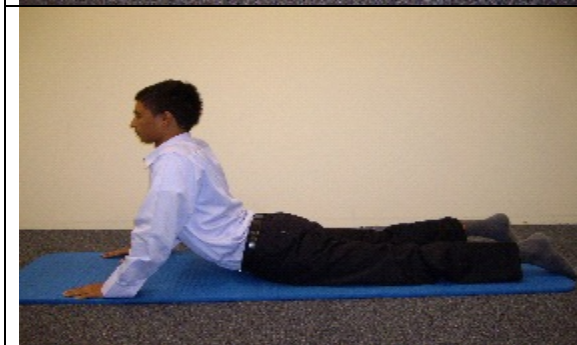
- Do not sit unless absolutely necessary (i.e. toilet). Do not slouch on the sofa, slump in the bath or do anything which puts you in a flexed position.
- Do not bend over or try to pick anything up.
- Do not forget your exercises.

By arching the low back, pressure can be taken off the back side of the disc. If this is done with frequency, the layers of the annulus can begin to heal and can form scar tissue. As the disc heals, the bulges reduce in size and take the pressure off the nerves, decreasing or eliminating the referred pain down the legs.



### LUMBAR ROTATION

- Lie on back with knees bent and feet flat on floor
- Roll your knees to the left and to the right as far as feels comfortable
- Hold for 3 seconds and repeat 20 times in each direction



### LUMBAR EXTENSION

- Lie on stomach with your palms under your shoulders
- Push up onto your hands to lift your chest off the floor
- Keep your hips flat on the floor
- Hold for 10 seconds, then slowly lower. Repeat 5 times