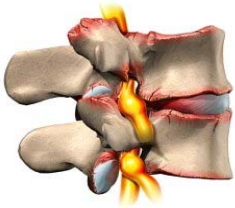


## Degenerative Disc Disease



Lumbar degenerative disc disease is typically a normal process of aging. Over time, the lumbar discs lose moisture content, diminishing their ability to tolerate axial pressure, and making the annulus of the disc susceptible to fissuring.

This process in turn results in increased pressure at the vertebral endplates and zygoapophysial joints. Over time, loss of disc height and osteophyte formation causes narrowing of the central and lateral canals and impingement of neural tissue.

Individuals who suffer degenerative disc disease may experience discomfort due to inflammation, and a loss of stability at the affected spinal segment. Their symptoms may include:

- Central low back pain
- Pain radiating from the low back into the buttocks and legs
- Numbness, tingling or "clumsiness" in the leg or foot
- Pain with prolonged sitting or standing
- Pain or "catching" in the low back with movement such as stooping, rising from sitting or twisting

Physiotherapists who specialize in the treatment of lumbar spine dysfunction have participated in post-graduate training to understand the biomechanics of the lumbar spine, as well as its neural and muscular systems. They are able to assess the joint mobility of the lumbar spine, as well as the strength and function of muscles acting to support and stabilize this region.

As part of a comprehensive physiotherapy assessment the strength, mobility and mechanics of adjacent structures including the hip girdle, pelvis and lower kinetic chain are also evaluated.

The following physiotherapy interventions have been demonstrated by the research literature as effective in decreasing pain, decreasing use of medication, decreasing time lost from work, improving perceived level of disability and improving quality of life:

- Manual and manipulative therapy
- Education about pain and back care
- Exercise to strengthen and stabilize the lumbar spine
- Aerobic exercise
- Work-specific functional exercise
- Acupuncture

### References:

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**For further information about physiotherapy treatment for degenerative disc disease, or to book an appointment with a registered physiotherapist who specializes in the assessment and treatment of lumbar spine dysfunction, please contact Stonetown Physiotherapy & Sports Injuries Clinic**

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