

Meditrac's Glossary

Annulus fibrosis - Cartilage-like material formed in a series of rings surrounding the nucleus pulposus (soft center) of a disc.

Backache - An ache or pain affecting the back, most commonly the lower back. This is because the low back supports most of the body's weight. You may have a tingling or burning sensation, a dull aching, or sharp pain and may also experience weakness in your legs or feet.

Cauda equina - A region at the lower end of the spinal column in which nerve roots branch out in a fashion that resembles a horse's tail.

Cervical - The neck region where the vertebrae (bones of the spine) curve forward.

Chemoneucleolysis - A surgical procedure in which an enzyme is injected to dissolve a portion of the intervertebral disc.

Chiropractic - A system of alternative medicine of mechanical therapeutics first introduced in 1895 in the U.S.A.. Chiropractic associates many diseases on the poor alignment of the vertebrae resulting in a disruption in the functioning of the nerves. Chiropractors treat disease with traction, manipulation and adjustment of the displaced vertebrae in order to relieve pressure on the nerves.

CT Scan - A sophisticated x-ray using a computer to produce a detailed cross-sectional three-dimensional picture of the bone and discs.

Discectomy - Surgical removal of part or the entire herniated intervertebral disc.

Electrical nerve stimulation - A type of physical therapy treatment that utilizes various frequencies and wave forms of electrical current, which have therapeutic effects on the nervous and musculoskeletal systems.

Electromyography (EMG) - Procedure that tests nerves and muscles providing information to help determine if surgery may be required.

Herniated disc - A disc that is displaced from its position between two vertebrae, with injury to the annular ligament.

Ligament - Strong, dense structures made of connective tissue that stabilize a joint, connecting bone to bone across the joint.

Low back pain - Pain at the base of the spine that can be caused by several factors.

Lumbar - The low back region that curves forward in the same direction as the cervical spine.

Lumbago - a symptom defined as a mid to lower back pain which may extend to the buttocks, thigh(s) and leg(s) in either a unilateral or bilateral fashion. One of the most common causes of Lumbago is a herniated intervertebral disc .

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) - Magnetic radio frequency energy used to see internal structures of the body, including bone, discs, and nerves without the use of x-rays.

Nucleus pulposus - Soft center of an intervertebral disc, made up of gel-like substance.

Osteophyte - A small, abnormal bony outgrowth.

Pinched Nerve - A pinched nerve is a nerve with pressure applied to it. In the spine, a pinched nerve is usually caused by a herniated disk pressing on it. Pinched nerves in the spine tend to happen in the neck and low back as these are the areas that do the most moving. Symptoms of a pinched nerve are: weakness, tenderness, prickly sensation, stabbing sensation, burning sensation .

Prolapsed disc - A disc that bulges out from its position between two vertebrae.

Ruptured disc - A disc with a torn annulus (the tough outer covering of a disc).

Sciatic nerve - The nerve that serves the legs and originates from several levels of the lower back.

Sciatica - An inflammation of the sciatic nerve usually marked by tenderness along the course of the nerve through the buttocks, thigh, and leg.

Spinal cord - The column of nerve tissue that runs from the brain to the lower back.

Spinal fusion - A process in which the disc and cartilage is removed from between the vertebrae, and bone grafts (often harvested from the pelvis) are placed between or alongside the vertebrae to join the bones together.

Stenosis - Narrowing of a portion of the spinal canal, usually because of bony overgrowth.

Slipped Disc - Also known as a herniated disc (medical term: prolapsed intervertebral disc). The disc does not actually "slip," but rather a portion of the disc breaks off or

bulges and protrudes into the spinal canal creating pressure against one or more of the spinal nerves which can cause pain, weakness or numbness in the area of the body served by those nerves.

Tendons - White glistening fiber bands of tissue that attach muscle to bone.

Thoracic - The trunk region where the vertebral column curves in a rearward fashion.

Vertebral column - Flexible structure that forms the "backbone" of the skeleton, arranged in a line from the base of the skull to the tailbone, houses and protects the spinal cord; also called the spine.

Whiplash - The sudden movement of the head backwards, forwards or sideways is commonly referred to as whiplash. Whiplash injury most commonly occurs in car crashes involving sudden deceleration but the injury can also occur in other strenuous physical activities by an accidental motion or force applied to the neck that results in movement beyond the neck's normal range of motion causing neck pain.