

Disc-Related Low Back Pain (Discogenic Pain)

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What Is Disc-Related Pain?

Disc-related low back pain (also called **discogenic pain**) comes from irritation or damage inside one of the spinal discs. These discs act like cushions between the bones of your spine. Over time, discs can develop small tears, wear down, or become irritated, which may cause pain and inflammation. **Also Known As:**

- Internal disc disruption
- Disc degeneration
- Annular tear

Common Symptoms

- Pain in the middle or lower back
- Pain that may spread into the buttocks or hips
- Rarely, pain may travel into the upper leg (usually not below the knee)
- Pain that is worse with sitting for long periods
- Pain with bending forward or lifting
- Relief when standing, walking, or lying down (in some cases)
- Pain that ranges from mild to severe

What Causes It?

Disc pain often develops from:

- Age-related wear and tear
- Repetitive bending, lifting, or sitting
- Poor posture or prolonged sitting
- Injury or sudden strain
- Reduced movement and poor disc nutrition over time

How Is It Diagnosed?

Diagnosis is based mainly on your symptoms, medical history, and physical examination. Your provider may also consider imaging:

- **MRI:** May show disc wear or small tears, but findings do not always match pain levels
- Other specialized tests (discogram) are rarely needed and are usually only considered in complex or surgical cases

It is important to know that many people have disc changes on imaging without having pain.

Treatment

Treatment may include:

- Staying active and avoiding prolonged bed rest
- Specific exercise programs to improve spinal strength and stability
- Gentle mobility and flexibility exercises
- Chiropractic care or manual therapy when appropriate
- Ice, or other therapies for symptom relief

Other Treatment Options

In some cases, additional treatment may include:

- Anti-inflammatory medications
- Muscle relaxers (short-term use)
- Epidural steroid injections for persistent pain
- Specialized spinal procedures in select cases
- Surgery (rare, usually only if symptoms are severe or do not improve over time)

Prognosis

Recovery varies from person to person. Disc-related pain can take longer to improve than other types of back pain. Most people improve with time, movement, and consistent rehabilitation, but symptoms may persist or return if underlying stress on the spine is not addressed.

Typical Duration of Care

A common treatment approach may include:

- About **12 visits in the first month**, followed by reassessment
- Ongoing care based on progress and functional improvement
- Total duration may range from several weeks to a few months depending on severity

Home exercises and activity changes are essential for long-term recovery.

When to Seek Medical Attention

Seek prompt medical care if you experience:

- Severe or worsening pain that does not improve
- Significant weakness in the legs
- Loss of bowel or bladder control
- Numbness in the groin or inner thighs
- Pain after a major injury or trauma