

FALL UPDATE

LUMBAR SPINAL STENOSIS

Patients with lumbar spinal stenosis - one of the most common reasons for spinal surgery in older people - are commonly recognized by a bent-forward, shuffling posture and characteristic small-step gait. Stenosis surgery, however, is a major procedure that is recommended only when conservative methods of care are not effective, or when stenosis is caused by tumors or accompanied by intolerable pain or severe neurological problems, such as loss of bowel and bladder function.

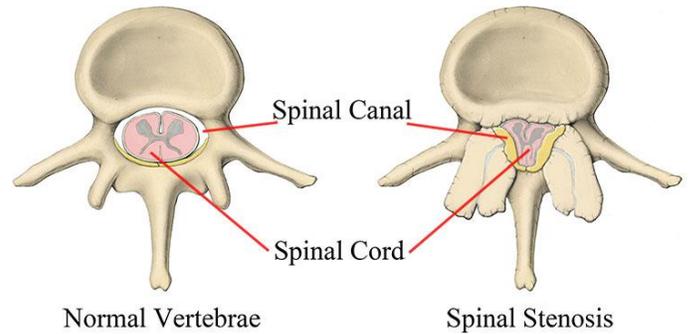
What is Stenosis?

Spinal stenosis is created by the narrowing of the spinal canal. This narrowing may be caused by mechanical problems or by abnormalities in the aging spine. It may or may not result in low-back pain, limping, and a lack of feeling in the legs.

Stenosis is often a degenerative condition. It may exist for years without causing pain or discomfort, but a fall or an accident can trigger characteristic stenotic pain. Numerous factors can cause stenosis, such as thickened ligaments, expanding infection, abscess, a congenital or developmental anomaly, degenerative changes, vertebral fractures or dislocations, or a spinal cord tumor.

Other conditions, such as herniated disc, can mimic stenosis. While herniated discs usually cause rapid and acute muscle spasms, discomfort caused by stenosis builds gradually. Other conditions that can be confused with stenosis include vascular claudication, peripheral vascular disease, and abdominal aortic aneurysms.

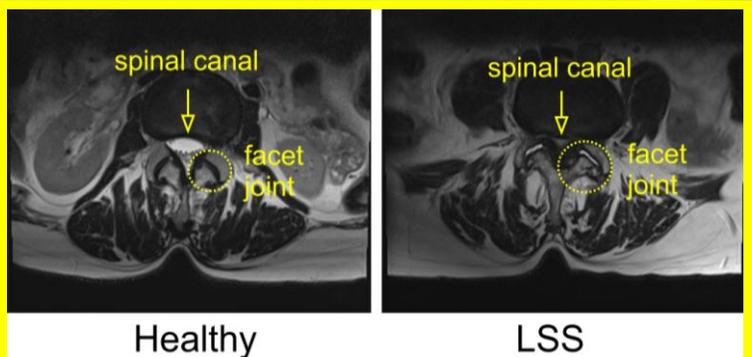
Claudication - pain triggered by walking - caused by vascular disease most often occurs after walking a fixed distance. Patients with spinal stenosis, however, walk variable distances before symptoms set in. Activities like riding a bike and walking up a hill can cause pain in vascular claudication, but not in those with stenosis. On the other hand, standing makes pain worse for stenotic patients, while it relieves vascular claudication.



How is Stenosis Diagnosed?

Spinal stenosis can be diagnosed based on the history of symptoms, physical examination, and imaging tests. An MRI is a very poor predictor of future disability in stenosis. An electrodiagnostic study is more dependable for information on a stenotic spine. To diagnosis stenosis caused by an abscess or an infection, blood work analyzed by a laboratory may be required, while vertebral tumors and spinal tumors require finely tuned imaging.

Although degeneration is the most common cause of the condition, spinal stenosis can also result from long-term steroid use. Degenerative stenosis also has multiple contributing factors, including disc degeneration, disc bulging, bone spur formation around the vertebrae and the facets, thickening of the soft tissues, and bulging around the disc. Some anatomical factors, such as enlarged, weakened bones cause by Paget's disease, can complicate both the degenerative process and treatment.



LUMBAR SPINAL STENOSIS (CONTINUED)

Signs and Symptoms of Stenosis

- Pseudoclaudication: pain triggered by walking or prolonged standing, which is usually improved by sitting in a forward leaning position
- Numbness, tingling, and hot or cold feelings in the legs
- Muscle weakness and spasms
- Bowel and bladder dysfunction, in severe cases

How is Stenosis Treated?

There are three basic treatment approaches to spinal stenosis:

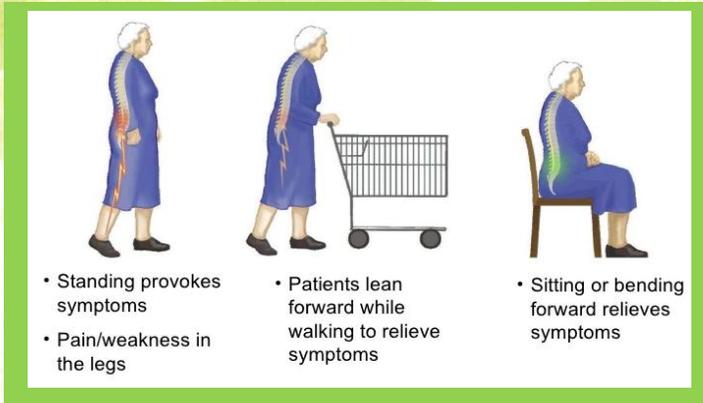
1. Conservative Medical Approach: bed rest, analgesics, local heat, muscle relaxants;
2. Conservative Chiropractic Approach: manipulation, modalities such as cold laser, exercise, self care techniques; and
3. Surgery.

The source of the stenosis often dictates the treatment.

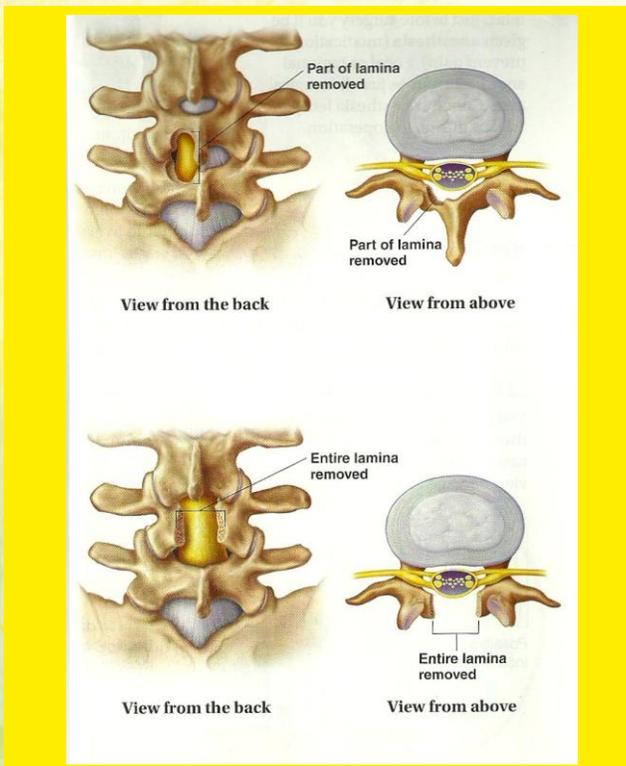
Although medications can provide pain relief, those powerful enough to deaden the pain can also exacerbate patient's already compromised sense of balance. When the patient loses bowel or bladder control, suffers intolerable leg pain and claudication, and has progressive loss of function or spinal cord tumors, surgery is the first and only option. The standard stenosis surgery procedure usually involves opening up the spinal canal and decompressing the neural elements by removing the bony structures that contribute to canal narrowing. Although many patients do fairly well after the surgery, the symptoms are likely to return after a period of time.

In many mild and moderate cases of stenosis, non-invasive conservative care, such as chiropractic, can help lessen pain and discomfort, maintain joint mobility, and allow the patient to keep a reasonable lifestyle, at least for some time. A technique called distraction manipulation may be helpful in reducing leg discomfort.

Home exercises are a major part of the conservative treatment program. Recommended four or five times a week, the exercises, such as bicycle riding or lying on the side and grasping the knees with their arms, focus on flexing the spine in a forward position and strengthening the lower back and stomach muscles. Exercises designed to mobilize the involved nerves have been found to be particularly helpful.



Positions to relieve stenosis symptoms



Surgery for Lumbar Spinal Stenosis

Ultimately, stenosis is a chronic condition that cannot be "cured", but it often can be improved, and improvement can be maintained over the long term. Patients can work with a healthcare provider, such as a chiropractor, to reduce symptoms and improve their quality of life.

APPLIED KINESIOLOGY

RESTORE YOUR BODY'S FUNCTION!

Applied Kinesiology (AK) is a system of diagnosing and treating structural, chemical, and mental imbalances in the body using manual muscle testing. It was first developed by a Chiropractor, Dr. George Goodheart Jr., in 1964, and has continued to grow and develop.

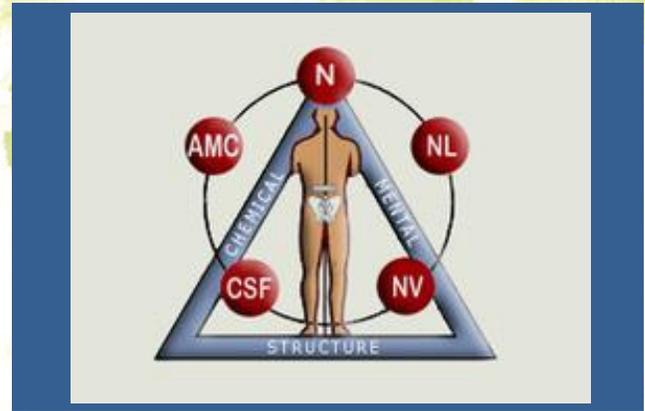
AK uses manual muscle testing along with knowledge of biomechanics and physiology to determine what is functioning abnormally in the body. For example, a muscle may test weak on its own, or a previously strong muscle may weaken upon adding some form of stress to the body; whenever weakness is found, the practitioner must then determine why there is dysfunction and attempt to make the appropriate correction. Weakness of a muscle may be related to a problem with:

- the musculoskeletal system;
- the nervous system;
- lymphatic drainage;
- the vascular supply to a muscle or organ;
- nutritional excess or deficiency;
- the cranio-sacral mechanism; or
- the acupuncture meridian system.

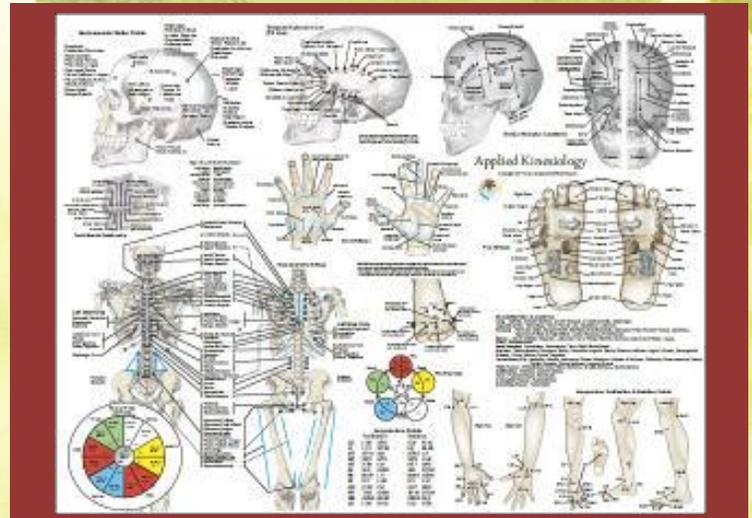
Treatment methods in AK have been adapted from many different facets of health care, including:

- Chiropractic Manipulation;
- Osteopathic Cranial Techniques;
- Acupuncture Meridian System;
- Myofascial Techniques;
- Nervous System Coordination Procedures; and
- Nutrition.

Upon completion of a thorough history and examination (which should include traditional exam procedures as well), a treatment program is designed to meet your individual body requirements; in many cases, several of the above techniques will be utilized to balance your muscles and help you achieve your maximal state of health.



The AK Triad of Health



Some of the systems and reflex points used in AK

MUSCLE RELATIONSHIPS

Each muscle in the body is related to a particular organ, an acupuncture meridian, a nutrient, and various types of reflex points in the body. We can use this information to help identify where there is dysfunction in the body and how to treat it.

For example, if a muscle is weak, we can touch specific points on the body that will cause the muscle to strengthen. The psoas muscle (a hip flexor) is related to the kidney. If we touch a specific point on the kidney meridian (related to acupuncture), the weak psoas may test strong. Treating the kidney point will cause a strengthening of the psoas muscle. Unfortunately this is only a simple example. The body is complicated and there may be several explanations for a weakening of a muscle which must all be identified and treated appropriately.



PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT: GLYCOGENICS

Glycogenics is a supplement containing the active form of B vitamins. B vitamins are often cofactors (i.e. helpers) of enzymes that are involved with energy metabolism and are involved many vital body functions. Each B vitamin has specific functions in addition to energy metabolism:

Vitamin	Function
Thiamine (B1)	Nerve Conduction
Riboflavin (B2)	Normal vision and skin health
Niacin (B3)	Nervous system, digestive system, skin health
Pantothenic Acid (B5)	Energy metabolism
Biotin	Energy metabolism
Pyridoxine (B6)	Helps make red blood cells
Folic Acid	Helps make DNA and new cells, especially red blood cells
Cobalamin (B12)	Nerve function, helps make new cells

B vitamins are water soluble meaning they are excreted through the kidneys and urine; it is normal to see a brighter yellow colour in your urine when taking B vitamins.

*Always consult your healthcare practitioner before commencing any supplement intake.



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