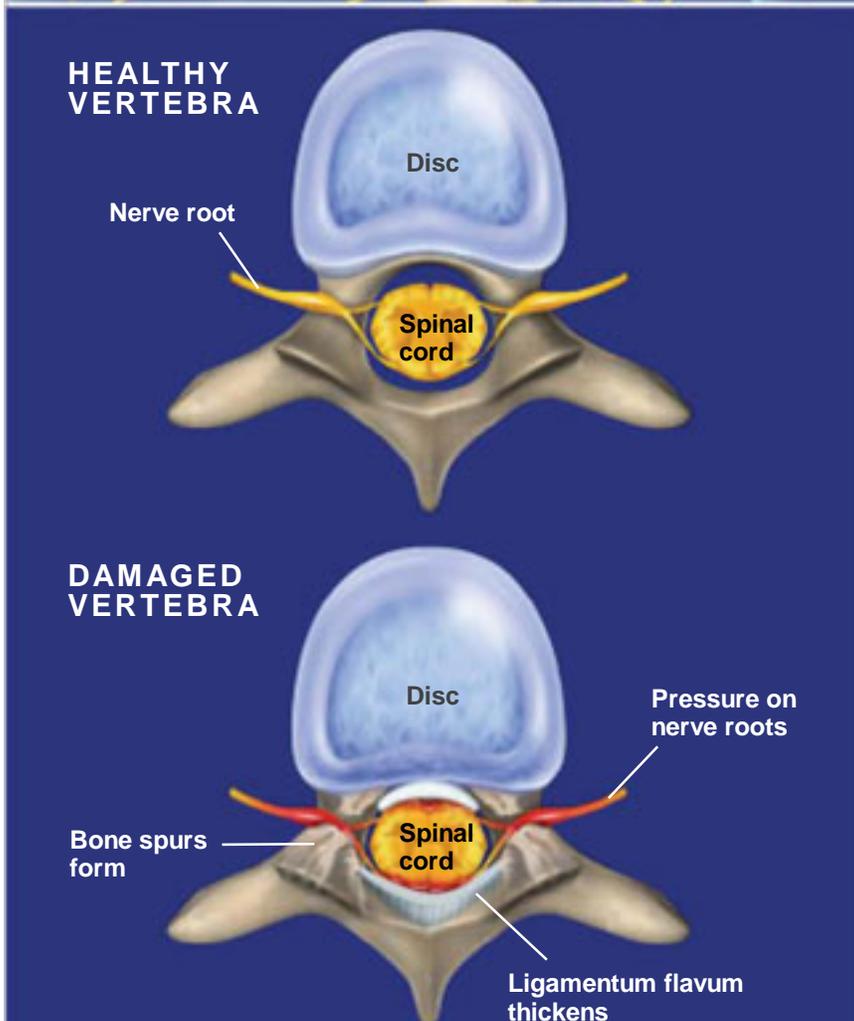
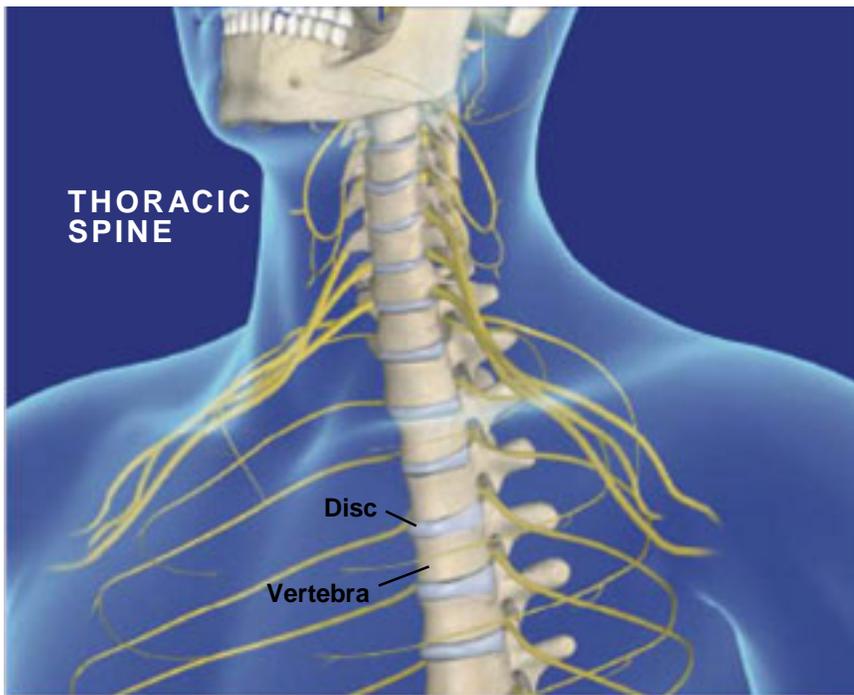


Spinal Stenosis (Thoracic)



Overview

This condition affects the thoracic spine between the neck and the lower back. It is a narrowing of the spinal canal that results from degeneration of bones in the spine, disc herniation, or thickening of the tissues that surround the spinal cord.

Anatomy of a Healthy Spine

In a healthy spine, the spinal canal has a rounded, triangular shape that provides an obstruction-free channel for the spinal cord. Each nerve root branches off of the spinal cord and travels through its respective opening, called a foramen, on either side of the vertebrae.

How Spinal Stenosis Forms

Spinal stenosis is typically caused by age and overuse, which can lead to degeneration of the spine's discs, bones and joints. Vertebrae may slip out of their normal alignment and rub harmfully against each other. The tissues that surround the spinal cord may thicken.

Pressure on Cord and Nerve Roots

Damage from the rubbing causes the formation of bony growths called bone spurs. Bone spurs may push into the spinal canal or foramen space. Tissues surrounding the spinal cord, such as the ligamentum flavum and posterior longitudinal ligament, may thicken and push into the spinal canal. This creates pressure against the spinal cord or nerve roots.

Symptoms

Symptoms may include pain in the back and legs, problems with balance and coordination, and loss of bowel or bladder function.

Treatment

Treatment options include anti-inflammatory medications, rest, epidural steroid injections, and physical therapy. If non-surgical treatments are unsuccessful, surgery may be required to remove the obstruction and repair the spine.