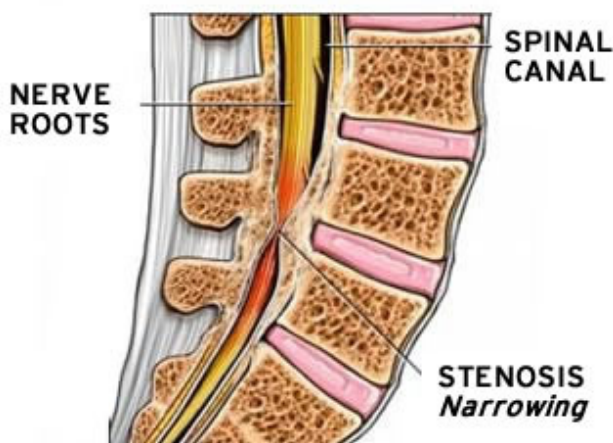
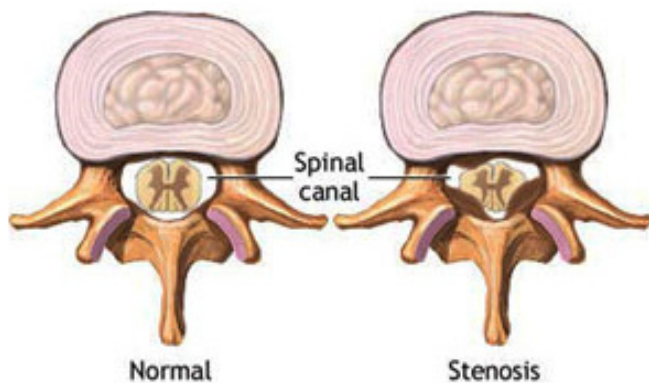
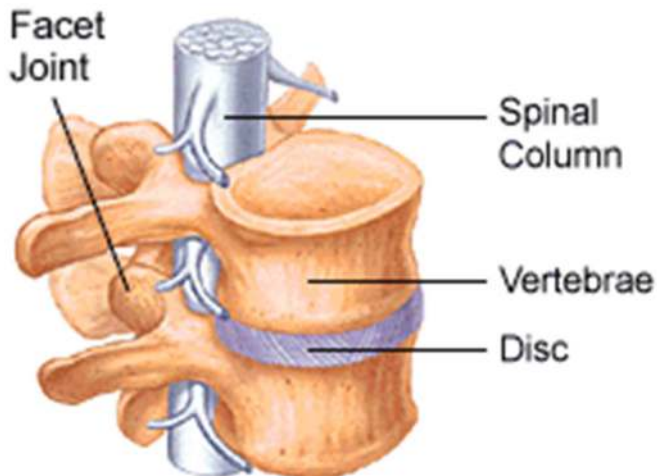


LUMBAR AND CERVICAL STENOSIS



Overview

The spine is made up of individual bones called vertebrae, which are separated by rubbery cushions called discs. They are stacked atop one another from the pelvis to the base of the skull. The stacked vertebrae form a tunnel called the spinal canal. The spinal cord is the nerve center of the body and passes through this wide opening. It is made up of millions of nerve fibers that branch off to form nerve roots, which exit the spine through small openings on each side of the vertebra called the foramen.

Stenosis

Spinal stenosis refers to a set of symptoms related to narrowing of the spinal canal in the low back (lumbar) or neck (cervical) seen with aging and degeneration. As the spinal canal narrows, the nerves that make up the spinal cord become irritated. If the stenosis become severe, the nerves can become compressed leading to worsening symptoms. Cervical stenosis can cause symptoms in the neck, arms and upper back while lumbar stenosis effects the mid-lower back and legs.

Causes

Stenosis can be caused by repetitious activity and is often age-related. Another major cause is decreased disc height causing the vertebrae above and below the disc to rub together creating bone spurs which enter the canal.

Symptoms

The symptoms of stenosis can be very mild or unnoticeable since spinal nerves have the ability to accommodate to some degree. Alternatively, severe compression can cause multiple nerves to be “choked off” with normal activities such as walking. This condition, when it significantly affects the quality of living, can be treated surgically by removal of the offending discs, overgrown ligaments and bone.