

## Discovering Disc Problems

### **Mission:**

We at West U Wellness are committed to serving people who want a natural, higher quality of life for themselves and their families. We acknowledge that physical, chemical, and particularly emotional stress has devastating effects on the nervous system. Chiropractic adjustments remove this nervous system interference. Therefore, we go to extraordinary measures in educating society about the benefits of chiropractic care for optimal health.

### **The Vertebral Disc**

The vertebral disc is a small cartilage pad that is situated between spinal bones. Its primary purpose is to act as a shock absorber between adjacent vertebrae. Spinal discs also act as ligaments that hold the vertebrae of the spine together and as cartilaginous joints that allow for slight mobility in the spine. There are a total of twenty-three vertebral discs in the spinal column.

### **Components Of Spinal Discs**

Discs are actually composed of two parts: a tough outer portion and a soft inner core and so the configuration of a disc has been likened to that of a jelly doughnut.

- The outer portion of the disc (annulus fibrosus) is the tough circular exterior designed to protect the inner core as well as evenly distribute pressures imposed on the structure.
- The inner core (nucleus pulposus) contains a loose network of fibers suspended in a protein gel.

### **A Disc Doesn't "Slip"**

Spinal discs have a very poor blood supply, thus they depend upon the circulation of joint fluids to bring in nutrients and expel waste. If a spinal joint loses its normal motion, then this circulation of fluid is impaired, and the health of the disc deteriorates. Like a wet sponge, a healthy disc is flexible. A dry sponge is hard, stiff, and can crack easily. This is how many disc

problems begin. Because of the way each disc is attached to the vertebra above and below it, a disc cannot "slip" as commonly thought. However, trauma or injury to the spine can cause discs to bulge, herniate, or worse, rupture. This can be quite painful, putting pressure on the spinal cord and nerve roots, often interfering with their function.

### **Disc Problems**

- 1) *Disc Tear* – this common disc injury is a small tear in the tough, outer cartilage material of the disc. This tear then allows the inner fluid to start leaking out, and the disc begins to wear thin.
- 2) *Bulging Disc* – This type of injury is when the soft jelly-like material in the center of the disc pushes to one side, forward or backward, and swelling occurs. The nucleus is still contained within the tough outer fibers, but can still cause pressure and painful symptoms.
- 3) *Herniated Disc* – Occurs when the soft jelly-like material from the nucleus in the center of the disc ruptures through the tough, outer fibers and extends to the outer edge or beyond the normal limits of the disc.
- 4) *Prolapsed Disc* – Is when a piece of disc material separates away and becomes a fragment or a free-floating piece.
- 5) *Desiccated Disc* – A disc loses its fluid content and degenerates down to a rough, worn-down or worn-out appearance. This occurs as the bones begin to fuse with one another.



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## ***What Can Be Done?***

The intervertebral disc like any part of your body needs nutrients, water, and even exercise to maintain its health.

Discs are composed mostly of cartilage and so need cartilage-supporting nutrients. These nutrients include: Glucosamine Sulfate, Vitamin C, Vitamin E, Calcium, Magnesium, Zinc, Manganese, Bioflavonoids, Chondroitin Sulfate, Mucopolysaccharides and MSM (Methyl Sulfonyl Methane) to name just a few. Always talk with your doctor before taking something you are unfamiliar with or have concerns about.

Did you know you're actually shorter at the end of the day than you are when you first wake-up? The reason for this is your vertebral discs lose some of their height as gravity and body weight pushes water out of the discs causing them to shrink throughout your day, thus you lose some of your height. Fortunately like sponges, our discs absorb water and increase their height when gravity is removed from our spines such as when we lay down. As we sleep we tend to regain our normal disc height. This process repeats itself daily, and is one reason for the recommendation of at least eight glasses of water per day.

Exercises allow discs to keep their shape and stay in place. For disc problems, extension exercises are the most commonly prescribed because they open the disc

spaces as the spine is gently arched backwards, acting like traction on the spine. This opening of disc spaces allows the discs themselves to return to a more normal shape and position. But as with any exercise routine, if it causes pain then stop the exercise.

Once an injury has occurred, however, proper nutrition, hydration and exercise may not be enough to heal a disc and/or restore normal disc function. The traditional approach to disc problems is surgery, and it often ignores spinal function. Conservative chiropractic care is safer and often more effective than back surgery.

Chiropractic approaches disc problems by restoring better motion and position to the spinal joints. Besides reducing disc bulging, better spinal function helps decrease inflammation which allows the healing process to begin. Many patients have avoided needless surgery or a dependency on pain pills by choosing conservative chiropractic care.

Acupuncture can also be used to reduce the pain associated with disc problems by re-channeling the body's natural energy and allowing the body to heal itself naturally.

*For more questions and answers about disc health, disc problems and spinal conditions contact Dr. Caroline Long and Dr. Sherman Yeager at West U Wellness.*

## **Fit for Life Program**

***High cholesterol? Rising blood pressure or blood sugar?  
Gaining weight? Lack of energy and activity?***

**We will start a new program soon!**



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**So join West U Wellness' 8-week doctor-supported "Fit for Life" program!**  
**Each week you will meet at our clinic to take measurements such as cholesterol, blood pressure, blood glucose, height, weight and body fat. You will be given proven exercises, equipment, and nutritional advice to help you achieve your ideal body weight. A personal trainer will lead the exercises and participants may be eligible for a one-month free pass to 24 Hour Fitness.**

**A great deal for only \$150.00!**

**As a bonus to "Fit for Life" or for anyone interested, you can join our West U Walking Club which will meet two times a week on **Mondays and Wednesday at 7:30 A.M. at West U Wellness.**  
**Call (713) 490-2225 today to sign-up!!!****

*Dr. Sherman Yeager & Dr. Caroline Long are available to give free "stress management" lectures to a variety of groups. If you would like us to speak at your company or have us come to offer free spinal screenings at your place of work, your school or your church, please contact our office at (713) 490-2225.*

West U Wellness hosts or participates in numerous events and activities each month. Included in these events are free health talks covering a different topic every **Tuesday at 6:00 PM** in West U Wellness. We believe these talks to be a means of allowing our patients to improve their lifestyles.

**\*Join us next Tuesday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>  
 at 6:00pm for more information on Disc Herniations!**

### **November Calendar of Events**

	1	2 Disc Herniations Health Talk*	3	4	5	6
7	8	9 Nutrition for the Skin w/Melissa Brandon	10	11	12	13 <b>West U Wellness Open</b>
14	15	16 Allergies Health Talk	17	18	19	20
21	22	23 Arthritis Health Talk	24	25 Thanksgiving Day (Closed)	26 (Closed)	27 (Closed)
28	29	30 Headaches Health Talk	29	30		