

Spinal Stenosis

A narrowing of the spinal column

By Brian Beise

EXPERT ADVICE

Treatment

“Spinal Stenosis, which is a stricture, or narrowing, that compresses the nerves, most commonly occurs in the lumbar region. This can cause leg pain, numbness, tingling and weakness. Arthritis is one of the major causes. If symptoms are not relieved by conservative management techniques, like anti-inflammatories (NSAIDS), physical therapy, and steroid injections, the patient may be a good candidate for surgical decompression. The surgery can often be done as an outpatient procedure and most patients have a fairly remarkable improvement of symptoms by the time they leave the hospital.”

Todd C. Bonvallet, M.D., orthopaedic spine surgeon, Spine Surgery Associates – Parkridge Medical Group



What is spinal stenosis?

Spinal stenosis is a narrowing of the space in the spinal column that contains the spinal cord or nerve roots. As the bones of the spinal column are brought closer together, nerves are pinched, leading to back and leg pain, especially when walking upright.

Who does it affect?

As with many spine disorders, spinal stenosis occurs most often in the neck and lower back. You can be born with a narrow canal and stenosis, or it can develop as bones, tissues, and spinal disks degenerate with age. You can also acquire it as a result of deformities/instabilities, disk herniation, cysts, or spinal fractures.

How is it diagnosed?

Diagnosing spinal stenosis begins with a complete medical history and a clinical exam (various tests measure range of motion and check for numbness and/or pain). If after these procedures a doctor suspects stenosis, he or she will order an MRI or CT Myelogram to assess the size of the spinal canal. If you have the condition, you will likely be referred to a spine specialist or orthopaedist.

What are my treatment options?

The first line of treatment for spinal stenosis includes activity modification (avoiding strenuous exercise and heavy lifting), anti-inflammatory medications, physical therapy, and, for those with severe pain, epidural steroid injections. If all of these measures fail and symptoms are severe, a doctor may recommend surgery to decompress the spinal canal. +

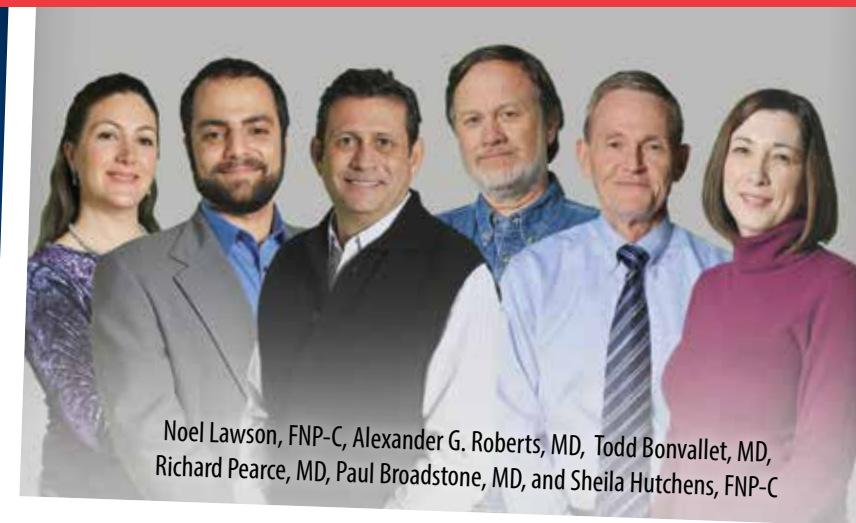


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Your spine care team



Noel Lawson, FNP-C, Alexander G. Roberts, MD, Todd Bonvallet, MD, Richard Pearce, MD, Paul Broadstone, MD, and Sheila Hutchens, FNP-C

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