



keep them hydrated. As we age, the circulation ends and the spine must move so that water can be drawn into the discs.

“Push on any portion of the donut and it bulges – hence the term the bulging disc. Push harder and the jelly comes out tearing the outer portion of the donut – the herniated disc.” Dr. Philip C. Agrios, Monmouth Total Health Care, Eatontown, NJ.

If the discs become dehydrated and lose their height, they become more vulnerable to cracks.”

A main factor of aging that contributes to the herniated disc is a condition called sarcopenia - muscle wasting which causes decreased strength and endurance,” says Agrios.

“This happens usually after the age 50 but I have seen it in patients much younger. One main cause of sarcopenia is chronic inflammation. If your muscles are not balanced correctly

because one area is weaker than the other, you have created an unbalanced skeletal frame causing increased

pressure within the disc. So if you push down on the donut too hard and the outer walls can’t contain the jelly – hello herniation.”

Fortunately, chiropractic care has a long history of successfully providing conservative care for disc conditions, says Strasser.

SYMPTOMS

Depending on where the disc is protruding the pain may vary. If for example, the disc is not pressing on a

spinal nerve, you may experience a low backache or no pain at all.

If it is pressing on a nerve, it is common to experience pain, numbness or weakness in the area of the body to which the nerve travels.

HANDS-ON-TREATMENT

Ice is often the first defense for a herniated disc, says Dr. Matt French, Gonstead Chiropractic Clinic, Phoenix, AZ. “One type of adjustment aims to illicit slight movement at the bone and moves the disc along with it because one is connected to the other.”

Strasser notes that since chiropractors are holistic doctors "slipped, herniated, or ruptured discs, are treated in a whole body context. The chiropractor considers stress and nutritional and lifestyle factors, especially as they relate to pain perception and reduction of inflammation. Conditioning and exercise, stress management, and improved nutrition and eating habits are all considered when the acute phase of pain and inflammation has been resolved.”

The low back disc is always seen in the context of the spine as a whole. In addition to addressing the low back, the chiropractor addresses possible spinal joint restrictions in the neck, midback, and extremities that may need correction. Chiropractors will often teach their patients exercises to do at home to complement office adjustments.

STAYING ON TRACK

Chiropractors maintain the importance of ongoing care even after the pain from a herniated disc is alleviated. Such attention can prevent any future reoccurrences. Dr. Bret Hartman, Hartman Chiropractic and Wellness Center, Wayne, NJ, says, “Ongoing chiropractic care can take pressure off the herniated disc area, which will help reduce your chance of re-injury.”