

## BULGING DISCS OF THE SPINE & CHIROPRACTIC

The spine is made up of a column of bones, called vertebrae. Between these vertebrae exist ligament-like pads, called intervertebral discs. Each disc has a tough outer fibrous ring (annulus fibrosis), and a soft gel-like center (nucleus pulposus). The function of these discs is to allow movement of the spine, facilitate proper curvature, and for shock absorption. In children and young adults, discs have high water content. As people age, the water content decreases and the discs become less flexible. Subsequently, the discs shrink and the space between the vertebrae narrows. This causes tearing and fissures in the outer ring of the disc, allowing the soft inner core to bulge outward and press on the root of a spinal nerve.

**Causes:** Improper and repetitive strenuous activities, smoking, poor posture, excessive body weight, lack of exercise, inadequate nutrition, whiplash, bend and twist while lifting, prolonged sitting with forward head carriage.

**Symptoms:** Signs and symptoms can include, but are not limited to:

- Sharp, shooting, aching or burning pain in the spine and/or limbs
- Numbness or decreased sensation in one or more limbs
- Tingling or pins and needles sensations in one of more limbs
- Muscle weakness in one or more limbs

\* In the most serious cases of disc injury, spinal cord and/or excessive neurological compression can occur. If you experience any of the following symptoms, seek immediate medical attention.

- Loss of bowel or bladder control
- Inability to urinate or defecate
- Sudden loss of feeling in buttocks, legs, or arms
- Inability to walk or use arms, from severe acute weakness
- Fever accompanied with back or neck pain

### How our experts can help:

Depending on the findings of the history and patient examination, the chiropractor will recommend an individualized plan of management. Early intervention to increase mobility is essential to maximize recovery. The treatment options may include:

- Patient education and reassurance
- Spinal mobilization and manipulation, if neurological assessment is clear
- Soft tissue therapy and icing/heating procedures
- Modalities including electrical stimulation, acupuncture, ultrasound etc.
- Rehabilitation and exercises
- Ergonomic and lifestyle changes
- Referral and co-management with medical doctor for pain medication