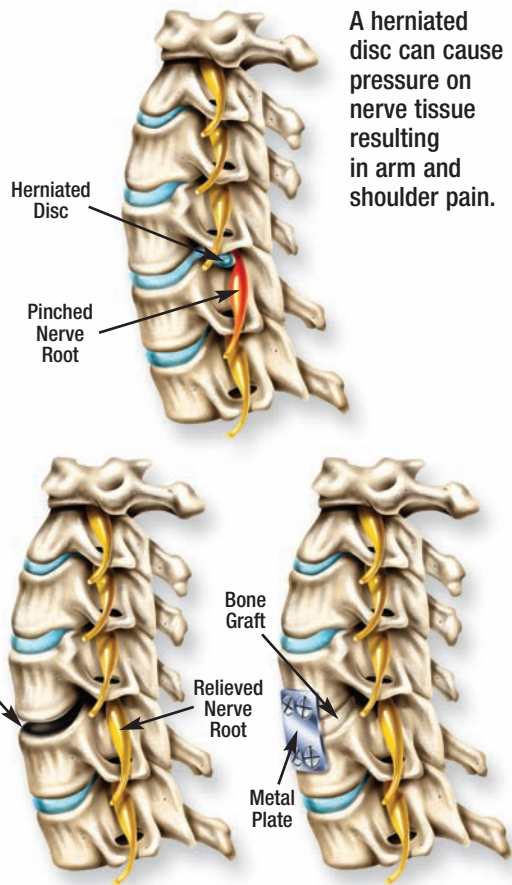




## CERVICAL DISCECTOMY



A herniated disc can cause pressure on nerve tissue resulting in arm and shoulder pain.

The disc material and bone spurs pressing on the nerve are removed, decompressing the area.

The adjacent vertebrae are then fused using bone graft alone or bone graft and a metal plate.

## Tips For A Healty Back

### Got milk?

When we talk about calcium and other nutrients that milk provides, we naturally think of children and the needs of their growing bones. However, reports indicate that people need more calcium after age 45 than when they were 10. Average adults need 1000 to 1,200 milligrams of calcium each day, equal to three servings of dairy products. They also need 400 units of vitamin D, and 600 to 800 units per day for people over the age of 61.

Give us a call for information about our free seminars: 504.897.7103



### Touro Infirmary

1401 Foucher Street

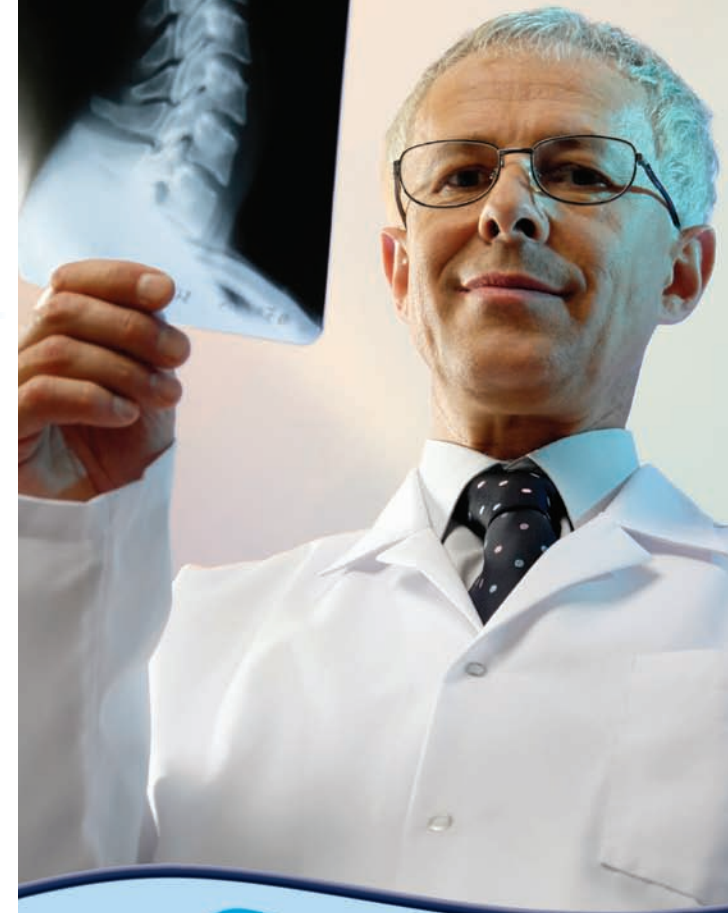
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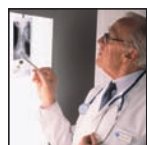
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# Understanding Cervical Discectomy





## What Is A Cervical Discectomy?



Cervical discectomy is a surgical procedure performed on the cervical (neck) section of the spine to relieve pressure on nerves, nerve roots or the spinal cord itself. Injury, arthritis, wear and tear, and poor posture can damage structures in the cervical spine.

Pressure on these structures can cause severe pain and numbness in the neck and arms. In many cases, after the disc or bony material causing the problem is removed, the doctor will fuse (join) the affected vertebrae to add stability to the neck.

The doctor can reach the cervical spine through a small incision in the front of the neck (anterior), or in the back of the neck (posterior).

## When Is Cervical Discectomy Surgery Considered?

For many people, frequent pain and/or numbness in the neck or arms will bring about a visit to the doctor.

A common problem in the cervical spine is a damaged or diseased disc. Sudden injury may cause a disc to bulge out (herniate), or a disc may wear out over time and flatten.

When a disc flattens, the vertebrae above and below may slip back and forth or even touch, and this can pinch or irritate the nerves and nerve roots. In addition, bony growths can form, further narrowing the pathways through which the nerves and nerve roots must travel.

Conservative treatments such as exercises, medications, braces and traction are quite often successful. If symptoms do not improve after a few weeks, surgery may be a consideration.

## How Is A Diagnosis Made?

Your doctor may use a number of approaches to determine the appropriate treatment plan and rule out other problems. These include:

**History:** Providing the doctor with an accurate history of the problem is very important. Has there been a recent injury? When and where it hurts, a description of the pain, what makes it worse, what makes it better – all are important details for your doctor to know.

**Physical Exam:** A thorough physical exam by a spine expert is very important.

**X-ray:** X-rays can show the structure of the vertebrae and how the joints line up, as well as the presence and magnitude of osteophytes (bone spurs).

**MRI & CT:** MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) and CT (Computerized Tomography) produce detailed computer images of soft tissues and bones. MRIs are especially beneficial for the study of soft tissue abnormalities such as disc protrusion and rupture. MRIs can



also show the spinal cord itself and the nerve roots as they leave the spinal column. CT scans give a cross-section view of the vertebrae and can show the shape and size of the spinal canal as well as the structures surrounding it.

**Myelograms:** A special dye is injected into the spinal column which allows the nerve roots to be visualized by x-rays.

**EMG:** EMG (Electromyography) measures the electrical activity of muscle contractions. This test can detect nerve or muscle irritation and damage.



## How Long Is The Hospital Stay?

The length of time spent in the hospital depends on your particular situation, the extent of the operation, and your general health. Many people who have had cervical discectomy and fusion return home in 2 or 3 days.

## How Long Is The Recovery Period?

Recovery time varies from person to person and depends on your particular situation.

It is important to maintain a positive attitude. Many patients begin daily walks shortly after you return home from the hospital. If a fusion procedure has been performed it can take up to 3 months for it to completely join together. Your doctor will give you specific instructions regarding bathing, driving, returning to work and other activities.

