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## Foraminal Encroachment

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[By Michael Perry, M.D.](#)



Foraminal encroachment means that degeneration in the spinal column has caused an obstruction of the foramina, which are the open spaces on either side of the vertebrae through which spinal nerves pass on their way to other parts of the body. As these neural passageways become blocked, it can force pressure on the nerves, which causes pain at the site of the impinged nerve as well as symptoms that travel to the extremities.

This condition of foraminal encroachment, which goes by other names such as [foraminal stenosis](#) and [spinal foraminal stenosis](#), can occur in any of the spinal regions: cervical (upper neck and back), thoracic (middle back) or lumbar (lower back). Generally, foraminal stenosis symptoms are unilateral, meaning they only occur on one side of the body. However, [bilateral foraminal stenosis](#) can also occur, in which foramina on both sides of the vertebrae are narrowed.

[Foraminal stenosis causes](#) may include any of the following:

- **Herniated disc** – an intervertebral disc ruptures and the inner jelly-like disc material (nucleus pulposus) extrudes into the spinal canal in the area of one or more foramina.
- **Bulging disc** – an intervertebral disc shifts and impinges on the foramen, contributing to foraminal encroachment.
- **Degenerative disc disease** – a condition due to aging during which intervertebral discs become thinner, drier and more brittle, making them extremely prone to damage. Degenerative disc disease can often be a cause of herniated discs and bulging discs, both of which contribute to foraminal encroachment.
- **Bone spurs**: often referred to as osteophytes, these are extra growths of bone that your body produces as a way to reinforce the spine when it senses the spine has begun to degenerate. However, these bone spurs can cause foraminal encroachment. Bone spurs are often brought on by arthritis of the spine.

There are a number of foraminal encroachment and foraminal stenosis treatments. Your physician may

suggest a course of prescription or over-the-counter pain medication, mild exercise, rest, hot and cold packs or anti-inflammatory steroid injections. If these conservative methods do not prove effective, your physician may also suggest [foraminal stenosis surgery](#).

If this is the case, Laser Spine Institute is ready to talk to you about our minimally invasive procedures as an alternative to traditional open back surgery. Remember, neck and back pain does not have to be a way of life. [Contact Laser Spine Institute](#) today for your MRI or CT scan review.

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\*Individual spine conditions, treatment and recovery times may vary. Each patient's experience with minimally invasive spine surgery will differ. All surgical procedures involve some level of risk. If directed to pursue surgery by your physician, prompt action is advised, as waiting may reduce the efficacy of surgical treatment. Some patients may require an experience that exceeds five days and others may require as few as four days. Patients may be required to rest 48 hours post-surgery. Should the patient be given a surgical order for a stabilization, additional time might be needed prior to the procedure for insurance authorization purposes. Postoperative instructions vary from patient to patient. Follow your doctor's advice. These procedures are reserved for those patients medically cleared and scheduled for minimally invasive treatment. Paid endorsements for Laser Spine Institute may not be for typical results. Laser Spine Institute requires each surgeon to complete an extensive Laser Spine Institute training program. MRI reviews are preliminary, and some patients' individual medical conditions may require additional testing that Laser Spine Institute will facilitate through a third-party service provider. Diagnostic procedures in some facilities are facilitated by Laser Spine Institute through a third-party provider. Medicaid currently not accepted.

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