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"With relief, I'm back to being a mother, wife and friend."

— Casey A., actual patient

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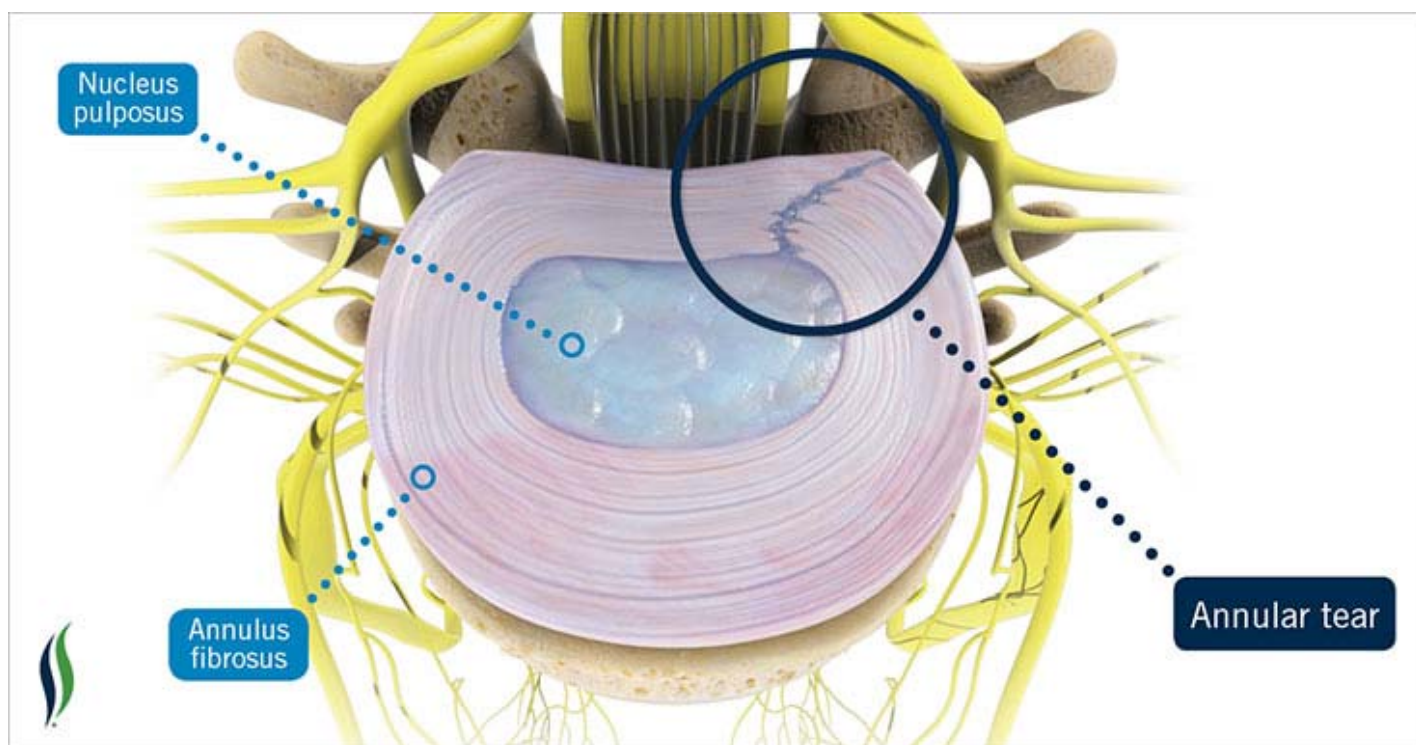
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Annular tear

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



An annular tear occurs when the tough exterior of an intervertebral disc (the annulus fibrosus) rips or tears. Intervertebral discs serve as cushions between the vertebrae, providing support to the bone structure of the neck and back while also acting as shock absorbers. If too much stress is exerted on a disc, either from the continual performance of everyday activities such as sitting and standing, or as a result of sudden trauma, an [annular tear](#) can occur.

Types of annular tears

The annulus fibrosus is constructed of several layers, each of which can become torn. The nature of the tear and the layers it affects will be the basis for how the tear is categorized:

- **Radial tears** — Typically caused by the natural aging process, radial tears begin at the center of the disc and extend all the way through the outer layer of the annulus fibrosus. These tears can cause a disc to herniate, which occurs when the center nucleus of a disc extrudes through the tear to the outside of the disc.

- **Peripheral tears** — These tears occur in the outer fibers of the annulus fibrosus and are usually brought on by traumatic injury or contact with a bone spur. Peripheral tears can lead to the degeneration or breakdown of an intervertebral disc.
- **Concentric tears** — When a tear occurs between the layers of the annulus fibrosus circumferentially, it is called a concentric tear, which is usually caused by injury.

Diagnosing an annular tear

Patients usually seek the guidance of a primary care physician or back specialist when experiencing pain that could be associated with an annular tear. Following a physical assessment, physicians typically perform one or more diagnostic tests. This condition is usually best seen on a CT discography, which utilizes dye to identify the annular tear. However, CT discography can be painful and not well tolerated. An MRI can be used to visualize intervertebral disc architecture painlessly; however, in some cases a tear might not be visible.

Patients who suspect they could have this condition, or any other degenerative neck or back condition, should seek the care of a physician or specialist for proper diagnosis and treatment. Several treatment options are available to allow a patient to regain his or her quality of life.

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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.

*Our MRI review is an informational review of the MRI report that you provide to us and is not a form of diagnosis. A diagnosis and a final determination of whether you may benefit from treatment at Laser Spine Institute can only be made after you have been physically examined by our medical professionals at Laser Spine Institute. The MRI Review has no value and will not be billed.

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