



## Degenerative disc disease

Degenerative disc disease (DDD) is not really a disease but a term used to describe the normal changes of the discs in the spine as a person ages. The breakdown of the discs can result in back or neck pain, as well as osteoarthritis, herniated disc, or spinal stenosis.

Age-related changes that cause DDD include a loss of fluid in the discs and tiny tears or cracks in the outer layer (annulus or capsule) of the disc. A sudden (acute) injury leading to a herniated disc may also begin the degeneration process.

Pain from DDD is initially treated with ice or heat and with nonprescription medications. Further treatment depends on whether the damaged disc has resulted in other conditions, such as osteoarthritis, a herniated disc, or spinal stenosis. Physical therapy and exercises are often recommended, and in some cases surgery may be recommended.

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