

# Focus On: Degenerative Disc Disease

Degenerative disc disease is a term that describes how the spinal discs change as you age.

Your spine is basically a long stack of bones.

These stacked bones are called vertebrae.

The vertebrae are cushioned by small, spongy discs that protect your spine and keep it flexible.

As you age, the discs can dry out, tear, or crack.

Degenerative disc disease usually happens in the discs in the lower back and the neck.

Symptoms include pain in the back or neck, depending on which discs are affected.

The pain may get worse when you sit, bend, lift, or twist. It can start and stop, and get worse over time.

Pain may spread to the arms, hands, buttocks, or thighs. You may have numbness or tingling in your arm or leg.

Treatment focuses on strengthening the muscles in your back and relieving symptoms.

Physical therapy can help you become stronger and more flexible.

You can try using ice or heat, or taking over-the-counter medicines.

Your doctor may also suggest steroid injections.

In severe cases, surgery may be an option.

To learn more about degenerative disc disease, talk to your doctor.