

OS15lite Lumbar Discectomy

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This document will give you information about a lumbar discectomy. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

What is sciatica?

Sciatica is pain down your leg caused by pressure on a nerve where it leaves your spine. This can happen if a disc in your spine becomes worn and develops a bulge (a 'slipped disc') (see figure 1).

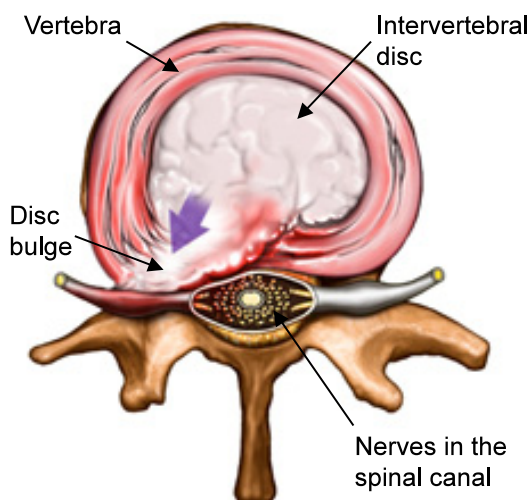


Figure 1

A disc bulge pressing on one of the nerves where it leaves the spine

What are the benefits of surgery?

You should recover more quickly from your sciatica. You may also be less likely to get sciatica again.

Are there any alternatives to surgery?

Many people get better in time without any surgery. Treatment involves painkillers and rest, followed by an exercise programme. If you have a lot of pain, you can also have a steroid injection in your spine.

What does the operation involve?

A variety of anaesthetic techniques is possible. The operation usually takes between three-quarters of an hour and an hour.

Your surgeon will make a cut in the centre of your lower back. They will part the muscles and remove a small amount of ligament and sometimes bone to get to the disc.

Your surgeon will remove the piece of disc that is pressing on the nerve.

What complications can happen?

1 General complications

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Unsightly scarring
- Blood clots
- Difficulty passing urine

2 Specific complications

- Continued pain or numbness down your leg
- Numbness between your legs, loss of normal bowel and bladder control and, in men, problems with having an erection
- Tear of the thin membrane that covers the nerves in your spine
- Infection of the intervertebral disc

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home the following day.

It is best not to do any heavy lifting after you have had back surgery, even if that is what your job involves.

Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, you should ask a member of the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Most people make a good recovery and are able to return to normal activities.

Summary

The common cause of sciatica is a bulge on one of the discs in your spine that presses on a nerve in your lower back. If the pain does not settle on its own, your surgeon can perform a lumbar discectomy to remove the bulge.

Acknowledgements

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