

## Stenosis and Leg Pain



It may seem counterintuitive, but the pain you feel in your legs may actually be caused by a problem in your spine called **stenosis**. As we age, areas of the spinal column can become pinched or narrowed, resulting in the constriction and irritation of nerves surrounding the spine. This may result in a variety of problems, including pain or numbness in the back, shoulders, arms and the legs. In its most severe form, spinal stenosis can have a dire effect on bowel and bladder function.

The most common kind of stenosis affects the lower spine. When the nerves in this area are compressed, a condition called **pseudoclaudication** occurs, whereby **a pain or cramp you feel in your legs when you walk downhill improves when you stand still**. A

herniated disk can also narrow your spinal canal and compress nerves in your lower spine, leading to pain that starts in your hip or buttocks and extends down the back of your leg. This pain is worse when you sit and generally affects only one side.

Surgery can help in extreme cases, but symptoms often return years later due to continued degeneration of the spine. Unfortunately, postoperative pain may be even worse than the initial discomfort caused by the stenosis.

Many stenosis sufferers find relief through nonsurgical means, most commonly through physical therapy. We can design a series of exercises to help you strengthen and stabilize the spine, enhance your flexibility and release tension in tight muscles. By following such a program, hopefully you will be walking pain free before you know it!