

Degenerative Spinal Conditions Q & A

What are degenerative spinal conditions?

Degenerative damage to the spine results from wear and tear over time rather than a specific injury. This damage is due to a combination of factors, including repetitive movements like bending and lifting and a loss of water content in your tissues that occurs naturally with age.

The highly experienced surgeons at Ascension Michigan Orthopaedics-Rochester treat many degenerative spinal conditions, including:

- Herniated discs
- Degenerative disc disease
- Spinal stenosis

When you're young, spinal discs are soft and act like cushions between your vertebrae. Over time, these discs lose volume and hydration, reducing their ability to absorb shock. Discs may herniate, meaning they may bulge outward, and press on a spinal nerve. In the later stages of disc degeneration, bone spurs may develop on your vertebrae and cause spinal stenosis.

How do I know if I have a degenerative spinal condition?

After age 40, nearly everyone experiences some degree of spinal degeneration. Common signs and symptoms of degenerative spinal conditions include:

- Back pain
- Pain that radiates into the hip and leg (sciatica)
- Numbness and tingling
- Muscle weakness
- Pain that worsens when lifting or twisting

Most degenerative spinal conditions worsen without treatment. If you have any of these signs or symptoms, the team at Ascension Michigan Orthopaedics-Rochester can help diagnose your condition and create a personalized treatment plan for you.

What are my treatment options for a degenerative spinal condition?

Depending on your needs, treatment can include nonsurgical treatments for degenerative spinal conditions. These treatments may include:

- Physical therapy
- Medications to relieve pain
- Cold laser therapy
- Lumbar epidural steroid injection

If nonsurgical treatments don't resolve your pain, surgical intervention may be necessary. Our team performs various surgical procedures for spinal degeneration, including instrumented spinal fusion with decompression. This procedure fuses two or more vertebrae and supports them with instruments like rods, plates, or screws.