



# Lumbar Spondylosis

## Topic Overview

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### What is spondylosis?

Spondylosis is age-related change of the [bones \(vertebrae\) and discs \(/health-library/tp10674#tp10674-sec\)](/health-library/tp10674#tp10674-sec) of the spine. These changes are often called [degenerative disc disease \(/health-library/uh2039#uh2039-sec\)](/health-library/uh2039#uh2039-sec) and [osteoarthritis \(/health-library/sto167524#sto167524-sec\)](/health-library/sto167524#sto167524-sec).

These changes don't always cause symptoms. But they are a common cause of spine problems that can range from mild to severe.

### What causes lumbar spondylosis?

As your body ages, the discs between the bones of the spine become stiffer and can break down. The bones also wear down and can grow bone spurs.

When this condition is in the lower back, it's called lumbar spondylosis.

### What are the symptoms?

There are often no symptoms. When there are symptoms, back pain and stiffness are the main ones. They are usually worse in the morning and get better throughout the day.

If bony growths are pushing against a [nerve root \(/health-library/stn166131#stn166131-sec\)](/health-library/stn166131#stn166131-sec) or the [spinal cord \(/health-library/zm2325#zm2325-sec\)](/health-library/zm2325#zm2325-sec), you may have numbness, tingling, weakness, or an aching, shooting pain in your buttock and leg.

### How is lumbar spondylosis diagnosed?

Lumbar spondylosis can usually be diagnosed based on your history of symptoms, a physical exam, and imaging tests. These are tests that produce various kinds of pictures of your body. Such tests include:

- [X-rays \(/health-library/tu6485#tu6485-sec\)](/health-library/tu6485#tu6485-sec). They can help measure the extent of arthritis or injuries to the bones.
- [MRI \(/health-library/stm159519#stm159519-sec\)](/health-library/stm159519#stm159519-sec). This test checks your spinal nerves and looks for disc problems.
- [CT scan \(/health-library/stc123812#stc123812-sec\)](/health-library/stc123812#stc123812-sec). This test checks your spinal canal, bones, and joints.

## How is it treated?

Pain and stiffness are first treated with ice or heat and with over-the-counter medicines. Physical therapy and daily exercises can be helpful.

If these treatments aren't helping you enough, you may need other treatments. This might be more likely to happen if you have spine problems such as a [herniated disc \(/health-library/sth149777#sth149777-sec\)](/health-library/sth149777#sth149777-sec) or [spinal stenosis \(/health-library/sts15048#sts15048-sec\)](/health-library/sts15048#sts15048-sec). In some cases, a shot of medicine in the joint area may offer short-term relief. For a severe problem, surgery may be an option.

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