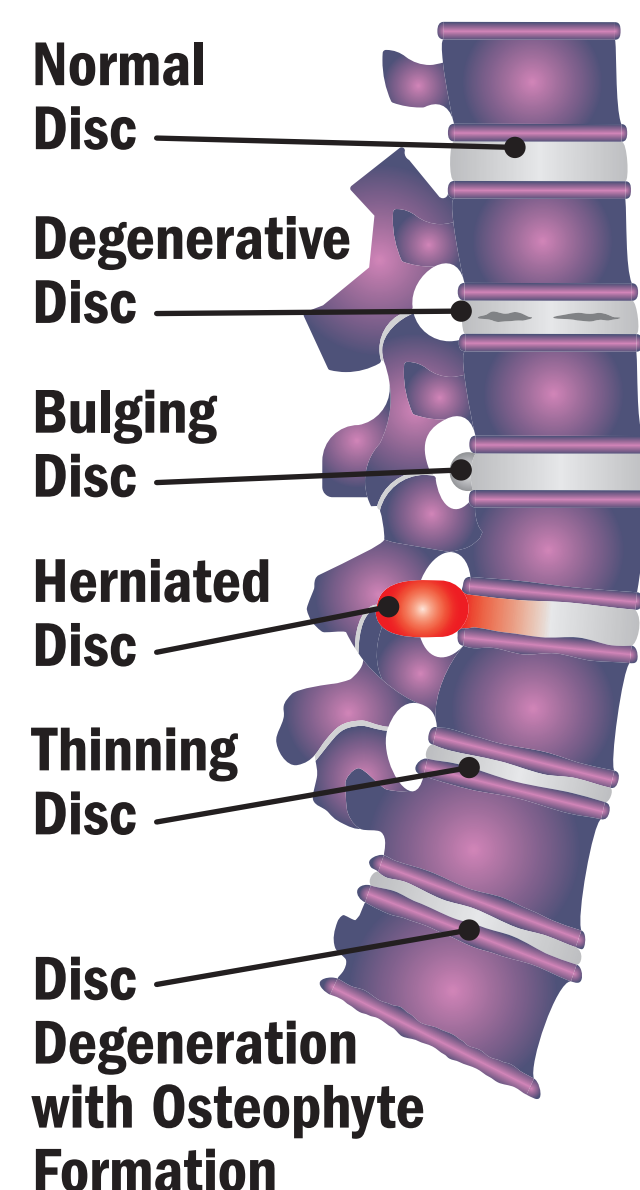# Low Back Injury Prevention

Keeping Your Back Healthy

- **Stretch Regularly.** Stretch everyday and before any strenuous activity or exercise.

- **Stay Active.** Physical activity and core strength will help protect your spine.

- **Maintain Good Posture.** Good posture supports a healthy spine as you age.

- **Work Smart.** Make sure you are working in a neutral, ergonomic position.

- **Footwear.** Wear comfortable lower-heeled shoes.

- **Sleep Position.** Sleep on your side with knees drawn into fetal position and on a firm surface.

- **Lifting Techniques.** Use proper lifting mechanics and don't lift objects that are too heavy.

- **Exercise & Eat Right to Avoid Weight Gain.** Excess weight around the midsection adds stress to lower back muscles.

- **Ensure Proper Nutrition.** Calcium, vitamin D, and phosphorus aid in new bone growth.

- **Stay Hydrated.** Hydration is important to maintain soft tissue elasticity and fluidity in joints.

- **Smoking Cessation.** Smoking decreases the blood flow to the lower part of the spine, which increases risk of disc degeneration. It also affects the body's ability to heal and increases risk of osteoporosis.
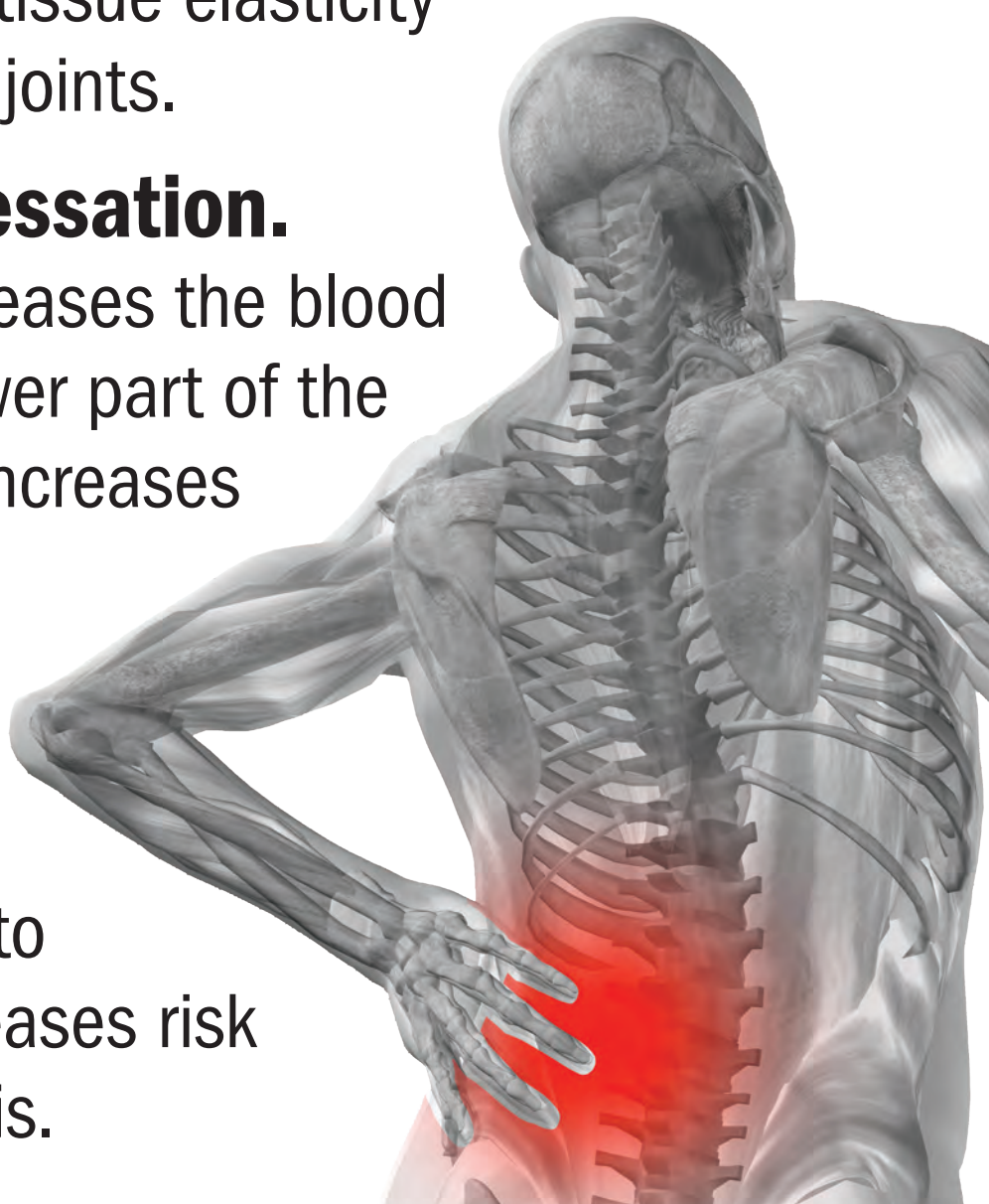
Risk Factors for Low Back Pain or Injury

- Age
- Fitness Level
- Weight Gain
- Pregnancy
- Genetics
- Occupation
- Mental Health (can affect perception of pain)

Normal Disc
Degenerative Disc
Bulging Disc
Herniated Disc
Thinning Disc
Disc Degeneration with Osteophyte Formation

Most Common Low Back Injuries

- **Sprains & Strains**
  - Caused by improper body mechanics, twisting, lifting
  - Can also trigger muscle spasms in surrounding areas

- **Disc Degeneration**
  - Part of the aging process
  - Discs start to lose their ability to cushion between vertebrae

- **Herniated Discs**
  - Compressed discs start to bulge out
  - Can cause radiculopathy if it compresses on the nerve root (numbness/tingling/pain)

Compressed Spinal Nerve

Normal Disc   Herniated Disc
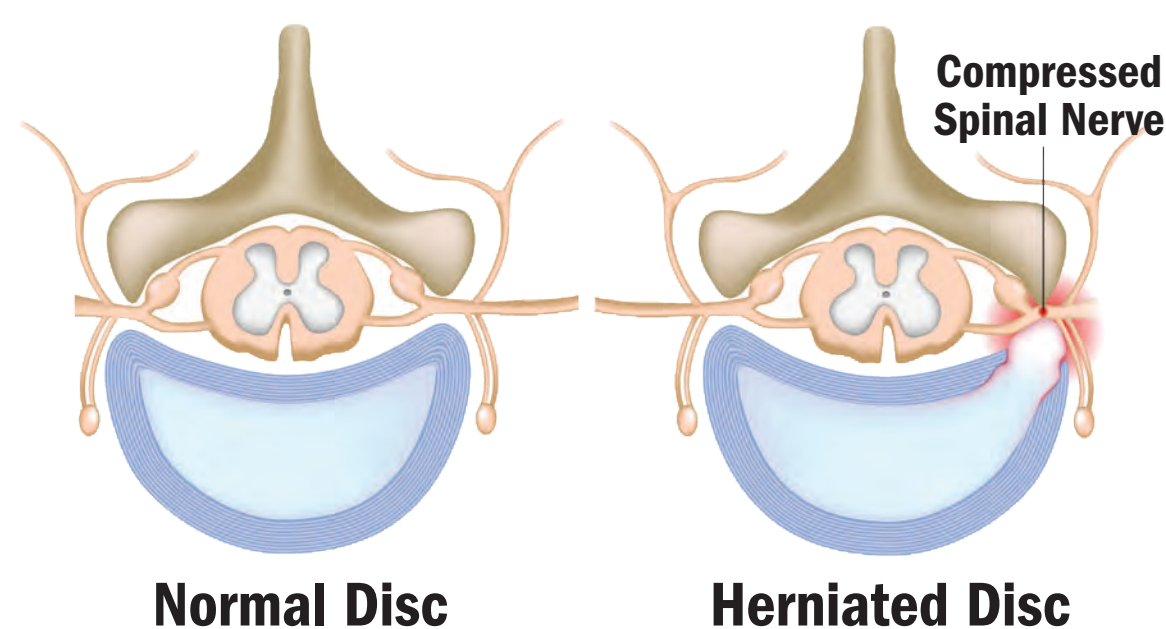
- **Sciatica**
  - Compression of the sciatic nerve
  - Radiculopathy (numbness/tingling/pain) that travels from buttocks down the back of the leg

THE GAME PLAN FOR HEALTH & SAFETY

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