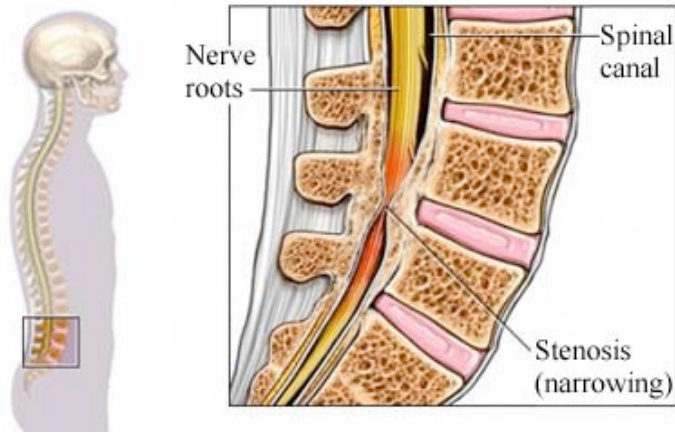


# Spinal Stenosis

## What is Spinal Stenosis?

Spinal stenosis is narrowing of the spinal canal causing compression of the nerve roots. This can be caused by bone spurs, a herniated disc, congenital defect (born with a narrow spinal canal), thickening of the ligaments between the vertebra, or spinal instability. Also where the nerve roots exit the spinal cord are called the spinal foramina. Sometimes there can be stenosis of these foramina, and this can cause nerve root irritation. However, the symptoms are different in that they are unilateral and not bilateral.



## What Causes Spinal Stenosis?

Spinal Stenosis is usually caused by anatomical abnormalities, such as a bone spur, congenital narrow spinal canal, or Spondylolisthesis. Spondylolisthesis is when a vertebra slips forward onto the vertebra below due to weakness or instability in the spine.

## What are the Symptoms?

Symptoms are usually described as bilateral leg weakness, pain, numbness, tingling, and diminished reflexes. Typically these symptoms are worsened with extension (leaning back, standing, and lying on ones stomach), which further decreases the space in the spinal canal. Activities such as standing and walking are problematic for patients with this condition. Flexion (bending forward or sitting) usually relieves symptoms.

## Treatment

Treatment for this condition should always begin by seeing your physician or an orthopedic specialist. If you are experiencing muscle weakness, or abnormal sensation into the lower extremity, please contact a specialist immediately. X-rays may be taken to see any degenerative changes in the bones of the spine. If more information is needed an MRI may be performed. The majority of patients experiencing spinal stenosis will not require surgical intervention. In therapy, you will be evaluated as an individual to customize a plan of care to treat the deficits noted. Some treatments may consist of manual traction, joint mobilizations, soft tissue mobilizations, therapeutic activity, postural education, activity modification instruction, and a comprehensive home exercise program. The goal of physical therapy is to attempt to alleviate symptoms, increase functional activity, educate the patient, and prevent future back pathology. In some cases

your physician may utilize cortisone, via an epidural injection, to assist with inflammation control and pain relief, in order to tolerate physical therapy intervention

**If you would like more information about this issue, or need a physician referral in your area, please call us at 310-860-9720.**