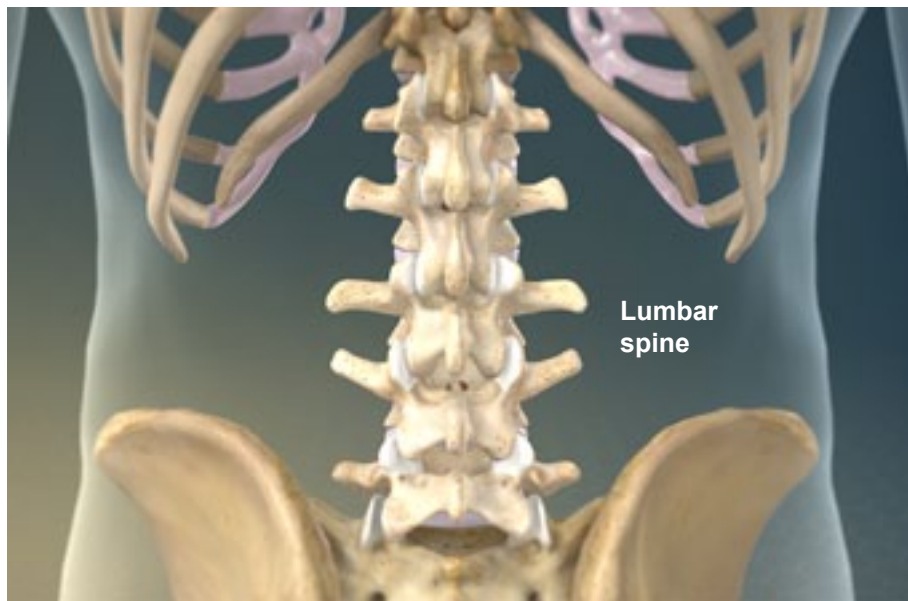




Where Lower Back Pain Begins



Overview

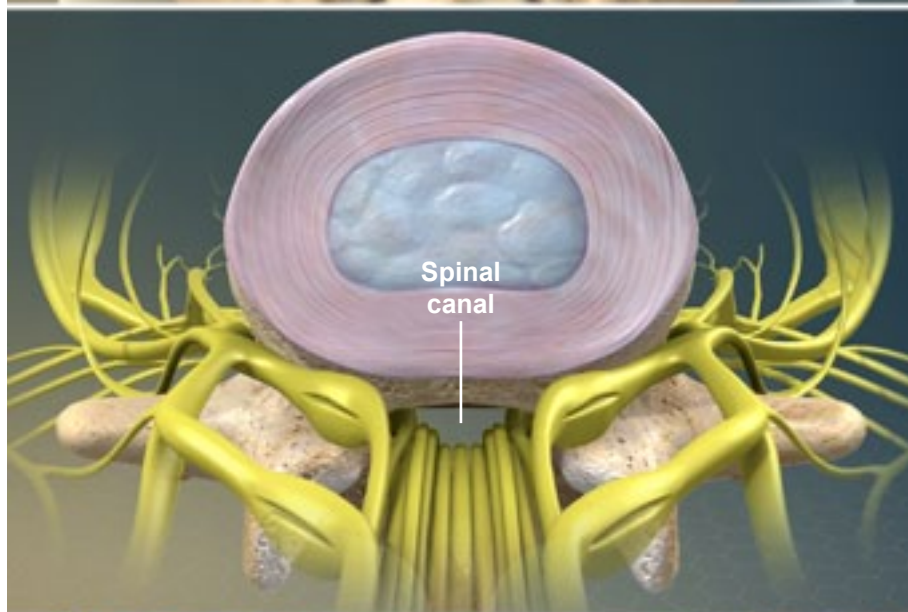
Lower back pain is a common problem that severely impacts the quality of your life. It can limit your ability to be active. It can cause you to miss work. Many different causes may lead to pain in your lower back.

About the Lumbar Spine

Let's learn about the structure of the lumbar spine to better understand back pain. Your lumbar spine is your lower back. There are five lumbar vertebrae. Between these vertebrae are discs. They cushion the bones and allow the spine to bend and twist.

Spinal Nerves

The spine protects the spinal nerves. These travel through a space called the spinal canal. Branches of spinal nerves exit the spine through spaces on both sides of the spine.



Common Causes of Pain

In many cases, back pain is caused by muscle or ligament strains. This can happen if you spend a day doing heavy lifting. But back pain can also be caused by compression of the spinal nerves. Herniated discs or bone growths caused by osteoarthritis can press against the nerves. Fractures of the spine can reduce the amount of space around them. This type of pain may not go away, even after weeks.

Symptoms

Symptoms of back pain can vary depending on the cause of your pain and the severity of your injury. You may have trouble bending or twisting your back. You may feel a dull ache or a stabbing pain. The pain may radiate down to one or both legs. It may cause weakness, numbness or tingling.

Treatment

Some types of back pain are treated with over-the-counter medications and ointments. Your healthcare provider may recommend prescription medications, cortisone injections or physical therapy. If these methods are not effective, you may benefit from surgery to correct a problem in your spine.

