

Spinal Stenosis

From sprains and strains to spinal stenosis! Talk about a big change in direction. Oh, and in case some of you are thinking I will run out of things to say, you lose. In my chosen field of work (to which I devote my life) there are truly an almost endless number of different topics to make my patients and readers aware.

Well, off we go into the mysterious land of spinal stenosis. Let me demystify it for you. I read a lot of newspapers and I see in the Detroit papers all the time ads for treatment of spinal stenosis. I guess if you think you may have it you are supposed to go to the place that advertised. Bad idea, for several reasons I feel.

As the term spinal stenosis is ordinarily used it refers to the lumbar area or lower back. It does occur in the middle of the back (dorsal spine) and even in the neck, but way less often than in the lumbar spine. There are several reasons, but I don't want to lose our focus, O.K.

If I could show you a single human vertebra bone you would understand. Picture worth a thousand words etc. I would hold it so you can see the large canal through which all the nerves pass. I'd put my little finger in the canal, which would be a normal sized spinal canal in the lower back. Then I'd take a drinking straw and put that through. If it barely fits, you would see what spinal stenosis represents. The canal can get even more constricted than that. I thought of another image; an hourglass.

Think of the spinal canal in the lower back as a tube filled with liquid with a whole bunch of nerves floating in the liquid, happy and doing their nerve work. If the canal gets smaller or constricted - that is stenosis. It occurs in many different degrees in different patients. The onset may be gradual and the symptoms can vary a lot.

The nerves don't appreciate this because they like their own space and their nourishment from the spinal fluid gets goofed up because it doesn't flow up and down as it should. What if your family represented the nerves and your house was the canal? Now I'm putting all of you in one small room to live. Get the idea? I thought you would. Do the nerves like it? Nooo. They complain like h..... as your family members would. The symptoms from spinal stenosis are the nerves complaining. Not always to the same degree, though, which makes it confusing for patients to know what is going on. Nerves are a lot like people in that some complain more than others. All of our emotional reaction to pain and

suffering is highly individual as everyone knows. That plays into it tremendously.

Cause

Wear and tear changes in the tissues and some arthritis changes in the vertebrae together produce the picture of spinal stenosis in most older patients. Hopefully the demystifying process has begun and I promise to cover symptoms and treatment next time. Thanks for stopping by.

All Orthopaedic Surgery problems can be evaluated by Dr. Haverbush at the Lakeview Community Wellness Center in Lakeview or at the office in Alma at 315 Warwick Dr., Alma, Michigan.

Please call 989-463-6092 for information or to schedule an appointment.

Future Lakeview Community Wellness Center Clinic dates are September 5 and September 19. Please don't forget there is a wealth of accurate information about Spinal Stenosis and all the other Orthopaedic conditions I treat on the office teaching website www.orthopodsurgeon.com. Please log on and check it out.

We are happy to answer questions from readers (all six of you, just kidding). You can e-mail me at orthopodsurgeon@hotmail.com or write to me at 315 Warwick Dr., Alma, Michigan 48801.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush