

Spinal stenosis, or neck pain, is a painful condition that usually occurs when the spinal column begins to narrow, in turn causing an ever increasing amount of pressure on the spinal cord. Usually brought on by age, the symptoms seem to worsen for the person over time, and not all at once. Sometimes the pain is worse on one particular side of the body, and numbness, weakness, and cramping may begin to occur. Spinal stenosis symptoms usually develop upon walking or standing for any long amount of time. The pain tends to leave or, at the very least, decrease by having the sufferer lean forward or sit down. Other symptoms that tend to appear during a spinal stenosis attack, are lack of bladder and bowel control, as well as poor balance when trying to walk or stand. Spinal stenosis causes another major source of neck pain, when nerve openings inside the spinal column become narrowed, causing a squeezing effect and increasing the overall pressure inside the column. The spine then can become painfully arthritic, even more so in the elderly, and the help of a professional physical therapist will likely be needed. Less often, spinal stenosis can occur by an injury that causes a pressure point, bone diseases that include Paget's disease or achondroplasia, slipped disks, tumors, or birth defects causing possible growths. Long term swelling increases the overall inflammation that already exists in the spine, making it increasingly harder to treat as the person ages. Usually a spinal MRI, CT scan, or EMG, are done to determine a positive or negative diagnosis. For extreme cases, which do not respond to the usual physical or massage therapy treatment, surgery should be performed as a last resort option. The surgery usually consists of relieving pressure around the spinal cord and the surrounding nerves. More often than not the neck pain still continues even after surgery, and may need to be combined with multiple therapies and medications. Unfortunately, there is not a cure-all for spinal stenosis, but with proper pain management techniques and therapy, you can make it as painless as possible while maintaining a positive and fulfilling life.