

# Spinal decompression

## The new way to treat herniated discs without surgery.

If you're suffering from a herniated disc and chiropractic adjustments\ physical therapy have not yielded sufficient benefit, you should ask your doctor if you might be a candidate for spinal decompression therapy.

What is spinal decompression therapy? It's a non-surgical traction based treatment for herniated or bulging discs in the neck and lower back. Anyone who has back and neck, or arm or leg pain caused by degenerated or damaged disc may be helped by spinal decompression therapy. Specific conditions that may be helped by this therapeutic procedure include herniated or bulging discs, spinal stenosis, sciatica, facet syndrome, spondylosis, or even failed spinal surgery.

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Many patients, some with magnetic resonance imaging MRI documented disc herniations, have achieved "good" to "excellent" results after spinal decompression therapy.

The computerize traction head of the decompression table or machine is the key to the therapies effectiveness. The pre-programmed patterns for ramping up and down the amount of axial distraction eliminate muscle guarding and permit decompression to occur at a specific disc level. This creates a negative pressure within the disc, allowing the pretreated or herniated portion to be pulled back within the normal confines of the disc, which permits healing to occur.

Your specific treatment plan will be determined by the doctor after your examination. Based on research and our doctor's clinical experience the best results are achieved within 32 sessions over a twelve-week period. To reduce inflammation and assist the healing process supporting structure are sometimes treated with passive therapy modalities (ice, moist heat, muscle stimulation, and Ultrasound to name a few), chiropractic adjustments (when indicated), and or active rehabilitation in order to strengthen the spinal musculature. While this may seem like a great deal of treatment, it is very reasonable when considering the cost and potential adverse outcomes associated with spinal surgery.

Spinal decompression therapy has saved many people from spinal surgery. If you are suffering from a degenerated or herniated disc we encourage you to explore safe and effective spinal decompression therapy before risking surgery. The rationale for treating a herniated disc without resorting to surgery has research support on its side: according to a recent study in the *Journal of American Medical Association*, surgery is no more effective than non-invasive treatments, including chiropractic care, for patients with lumbar disc herniation causing sciatica.

Ask your doctor for more information about spinal decompression and if you might be a candidate. If your doctor does not yet offer spinal decompression therapy, they can help refer you to someone who does.

References: This flier was written/comprised from material found in an article of the same name in the February edition of *To Your Health Magazine* by James D. Edwards DC.

## What does it mean?

*Not familiar with some of the terminology in this article. Don't worry, here's a brief explanation of what these terms mean in relation to your spine.*

**Anulus fibrosis:** The tough outer ring of a vertebral disc; it encase is nucleus pulposus (see description below) within the disc.

**Facet syndrome:** An irritation of one or more of the joints on the back of the spinal vertebra which comprise the spinal column.

**Herniated disc:** Displacement of the center of vertebral disc through a crack in the outer layer. A disc herniation can put pressure on the spinal nerves and cause pain.

**Muscle guarding:** muscles spasming, often in response to a painful stimulus.

**Nucleus Pulposus:** A gel-like substance within each intervertebral disc surrounded by the anulus fibrosis.

**Sciatica:** Pain in the lower back, buttocks, hips, or adjacent anatomical structures, frequently attributable to spinal dysfunction. Sciatica is also associated with pain, tingling, or numbness that radiates down a leg.

**Spinal stenosis:** Narrowing of the spine and one or more of three locations: in the center of the spine, where nerves branch from the spine, or in the space between the vertebra. This puts pressure on the spinal nerves and can cause pain.

**Spondylosis:** Otherwise known as spinal arthritis spondylosis is a degenerative condition in which the spinal discs weaken, particularly with age.

### ***More Questions?***

**Please call us: (757) 723-9131  
PrimeCare Medical Group**

# Spinal decompression

## Commonly asked Questions:

### *What is decompression therapy?*

Spinal decompression therapy is a type of non-invasive disc rehabilitation (NDR). It is a safe, pain free, and effective treatment for most pain syndromes. With this non-invasive treatment there are no drugs, no needles, no surgery, and rarely adverse side effects. It specifically addresses the problems caused by a compressed spinal disc. Spinal decompression therapy separates the vertebral segments resulting in a vacuum or negative pressure in the disc. This pulls discal material in, normalizing the anatomic position. The decreased disc pressure helps to relieve pressure on delicate spinal nerves, reduce inflammation, reduce muscle contraction, and ultimately promote healing.

### *Does it hurt?*

The decompression patient most often feels a gentle pulling sensation in their spine. Because the traction is applied very gradually, most patients have no discomfort. A safety button is given to the patient that allows him or her to stop the treatment at any time.

### *How long does it take?*

Treatments are tailored to the individual patient and their specific injury, but in general terms each decompression session takes approximately 20 minutes.

The entire course of treatment is twelve weeks. Patients receive thirty two treatments. Experience has taught us that most patients require this minimal amount of time and frequency of treatments to achieve the same results as the patients in the research studies. It's not enough, in our opinion, to relieve the patient's back or leg pain. Doing a good job means providing your patient with the rehabilitation and knowledge that keeps them from having to come back or end up in surgery.

### *Isn't this treatment really just traction?*

No. Simply pulling on your spine will not elicit true decompression. Basic traction is rarely applied precisely axially at the damaged disc level. True decompression of a specific spinal disc is tricky. Your height, weight, shape of your torso, and position of disc injury (or bulge) are all factors. The Decompression unit's computer has numerous protocols for different types of patients. The traction is not only applied at a specific angle, but at a variable rate.

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### *How much does it cost?*

Decompression traction is billed under the physical therapy portion of most insurance plans. With the proliferation of HMO and PPO plans, our office is always careful to check your specific plan's requirements and exclusions.

### *What kind of table or unit do you use?*

The Decompression table or computer controlled traction unit used in our office is a DTX model 4759. It is made by the Chattanooga Group a division of Encore Medical. The table has been cleared by the FDA.

### *Where are you located?*

Our office is located at 183 Woodland Road in Hampton Virginia. We are adjacent to the intersection of Pembroke Avenue and Woodland Road. Intersection landmarks include Jack's Family Restaurant and the State Farm office. For direction please call PrimeCare Medical Group at (757) 723-9131.

### *Our Staff:*

#### *Dr. Lisa D. Somerson, M.D.*

Dr. Lisa Somerson graduated from the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences Medical School in 1987. She completed her Family Medicine residency training at Scott AFB in 1990. She enjoys seeing patients of all ages and backgrounds. Dr. Somerson takes special interest in adolescent care and preventative medicine. She chose family medicine as her specialty because she values the unique relationship that develops over time between patients and their physician. Treating the whole person, the family, and the coordination of care are important to her as well. She takes pride in her role as teacher and patient advocate.

#### *Dr. Burt H. Rubin, D.C.*

Dr. Burt H. Rubin is a licensed Chiropractor by the Virginia Board of Medicine. He is licensed by the North Carolina Board of Chiropractic Examiners. Dr. Rubin has a Diplomate degree in Chiropractic Orthopedics and has been practicing in Hampton for nearly thirty years.

#### *Dr. Kevin S. Steele, D.C.*

Dr. Kevin S. Steele is a licensed Chiropractor by the Virginia Board of Medicine. He was the first doctor on the Virginia Peninsula to integrate traditional medical care, physical therapy, and alternative treatment in the same office setting. Dr. Steele has been practicing in Hampton for over ten years.

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