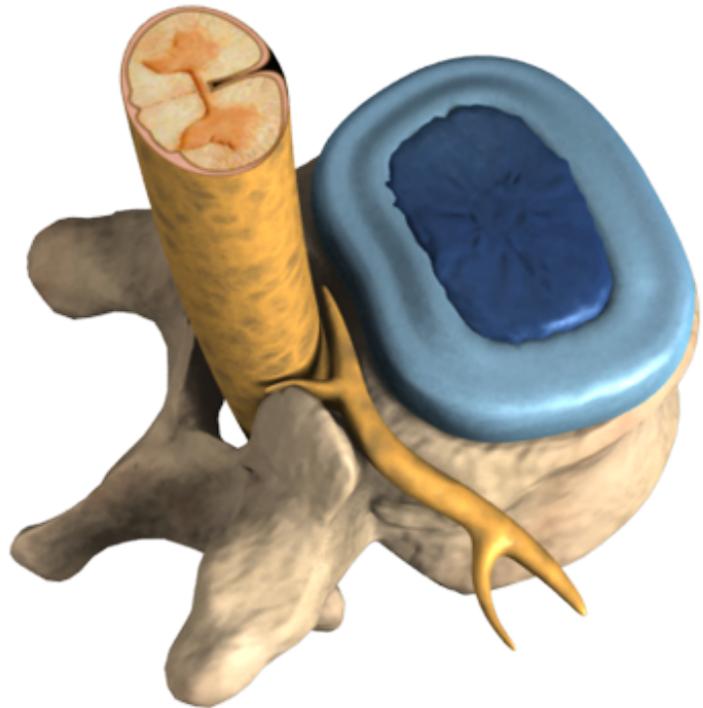
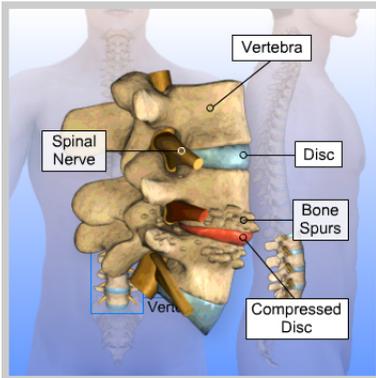


Osteoarthritis

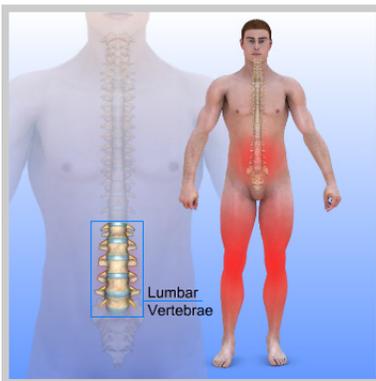
The term osteoarthritis is a general term that describes changes in the joints that occur as a person ages. Osteoarthritis of the spine causes joints along the spine to deteriorate and may result in the formation of bone spurs, cysts, and a narrowing of the disc space.





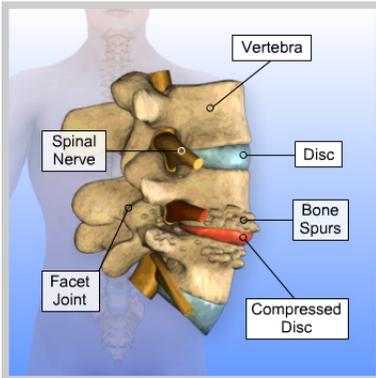
Introduction

The term osteoarthritis is a general term that describes changes in the joints that occur as a person ages. Osteoarthritis of the spine causes joints along the spine to deteriorate and may result in the formation of bone spurs, cysts, and a narrowing of the disc space.



Symptoms

The most common symptom of spinal osteoarthritis is low back pain that may radiate and be felt in the pelvis, buttocks, groin, and down the front of the thighs. Osteoarthritis in the cervical region is also common, and the associated neck pain may also be felt along the shoulders and between the shoulder blades. Both low back and neck pain tend to be worse in the morning and late in the evening, and are often described as stiffness. A minor, steady or intermittent ache that may be aggravated by motion, loss of flexibility, and tingling or sensations of numbness around the spine may also be symptoms.



Causes

The primary cause of osteoarthritis is normal wear and tear on the body due to the aging process. Repetitive motion and injuries from sports or employment and excessive body weight can also accelerate the degenerative process. The joints become irritated and inflamed as cartilage surrounding the facet joints of the spine breaks down over time. The discs between the vertebrae also degenerate, and the decreased disc height affects how the joint moves. Pain may result from friction between the joints and the body often produces bone spurs and cysts that may also cause pressure on the spinal cord and/or nerves.



Summary

Patients can often play an active role in treating osteoarthritis to avoid deterioration and a worsening of their symptoms. Treating osteoarthritis generally involves avoiding damaging activities, managing the inflammation, reducing pain, controlling one's weight, and maintaining flexibility with exercise.