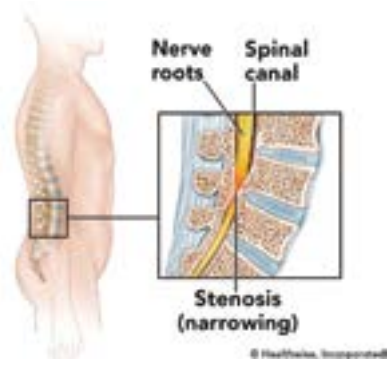




LUMBAR STENOSIS: What You Can Do

Stenosis in the spine is the narrowing of the bony canal that surrounds the nerves. It may result from trauma or as a normal part of aging. When the narrowing happens in the lower part of your back, it is called lumbar stenosis. This may put pressure on the nerves and can cause pain, numbness, or weakness in your buttocks, legs, or feet. When you bend backwards, the space around the nerves gets narrower and can make your symptoms worse. Bending forward opens up the space and can make your symptoms better. You can manage your symptoms by making some lifestyle changes and incorporating daily stretching and strengthening exercises like the ones shown here.



| If your symptoms increase when you: | Then try: |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| walk | using walking sticks, a cane, or walker |
| stand for a long time | doing pelvic tilts (see page 5) or putting your foot on a stool |
| sleep on your back | sleeping with 1 or 2 pillows under your knees |
| sleep on your stomach | placing 1 or 2 pillows under your stomach |
| reach overhead | doing pelvic tilts (see page 5) and using a sturdy stool so that you do not have to reach as high |

Lifestyle changes

These simple changes can make a difference:

- Learn to move in ways that don't put a strain on your lower back.
- Change your position frequently.
- Sit down often.
- Avoid painful positions.
- Exercise daily.
- Maintain a healthy weight.

TIPS FOR MANAGING FLARE-UPS

Cold or heat. Put a cold or ice pack on your back for 10 to 15 minutes several times each day. Be sure to place a thin towel between your skin and the cold or ice pack to prevent a rash or burn. If heat feels better, follow the same directions.

Pain relief. Lie on your back with your knees bent. You may place 3 or 4 pillows under your knees for comfort. Press your hands into your thighs. Hold 20 to 30 seconds, repeat 3 to 5 times for pain relief.



Medications. If your doctor prescribed medicine for pain, take it exactly as directed.

Aerobic exercise

This can improve endurance and improve circulation. Walking (with sticks), walking uphill on a treadmill, riding a bike, or doing pool exercises are all good choices. Spread your activity out during the week and even into smaller chunks of time during the day. Begin with 10 minutes of moderate activity, 3 times a day, 5 days a week. As you are able, work up to 60 minutes a day, 5 days a week. If you sit a lot during the day, consider walking during your breaks.

Stretches and strengthening exercises

Follow a daily stretching and strengthening program to improve flexibility and strength.

Pelvic tilt lying down

Lie down on your back with your knees bent. Gently tighten your stomach muscles as you flatten your back against the floor or the bed. Hold 5 to 10 seconds and repeat 10 times. Repeat 3 or more times every day.



Pelvic tilt standing up

While standing, tighten your stomach and buttock muscles. Flatten your lower back slightly. Hold 5 to 10 seconds and repeat 10 times. Repeat 3 or more times every day.



standing normally



standing with pelvic tilt

Single and double knee to chest

Lie on your back. With both hands or with a towel or strap, pull 1 or both knees toward your chest. Hold for 30 to 60 seconds, repeat 2 times. Tighten your stomach muscles and then slowly let your leg(s) back down one at a time.



single knee to chest
without towel



single knee to chest
with towel



double knee to chest
without towel



double knee to chest
with towel

Isometric gluteal/abdominal strengthening

Lie on your back with your knees bent. Gently tighten your stomach muscles. Hold 5 to 10 seconds and repeat 10 times. Gently tighten your buttocks. Hold 5 to 10 seconds and repeat 10 times. Do this 3 or more times every day.



Hip and thigh stretch

Stand and place your foot on a chair behind you. Squeeze your buttock muscles to protect your back. You should feel a stretch in the front of your upper leg. Hold 30 to 60 seconds and repeat 2 times. Alternate position: Kneeling on the floor.



standing



kneeling

Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care.

For example, call if you:

- Lose bowel or bladder control.
- Suddenly cannot walk or stand.
- Have sudden weakness or numbness in both legs.

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if you have:

- New pain, numbness, tingling, or weakness, especially in the buttocks/genital/rectal area.
- New or worse back pain with fever, painful urination, or other signs of urinary tract infection.

Other resources

- Connect to our website at kp.org to access health and drug encyclopedias, interactive programs, health classes, and much more.
- When your back feels better, go to your doctor or your physical therapist's home page at kp.org/mydoctor, click on the Healthy Living Resources, select videos, and then select the Spine Care Exercise Videos.
- Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, and other resources.
- If you are hit, hurt, or threatened by a partner or spouse, this can seriously affect your health. There is help. Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or connect to ndvh.org.



Consult with your physical therapist or doctor if you experience an increase in your symptoms with recommended exercises, or if you develop new symptoms of numbness, tingling, or a spread of the pain. This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse the medications or products mentioned. Any trade names listed are for easy identification only.

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