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**DEGENERATIVE
DISC DISEASE**



Spine Institute



DEGENERATIVE DISC DISEASE

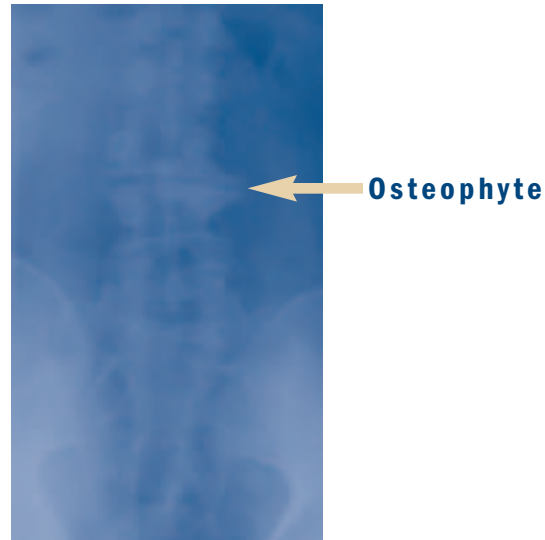
Degenerative Disc Disease is a gradual process that is a normal part of aging, but in some instances may compromise the spine. Although Degenerative Disc Disease is relatively common, its effects are usually not severe enough to need medical attention.

Degenerative changes in the spine often cause the loss of normal structure and/or function. This degenerative process can cause many problems with the spine. Each physical action you perform during the day can contribute to the wear and tear of the spine and, over time, these daily stresses and minor injuries can accumulate. Minor injuries may occur but not cause pain at the time of the injury. However, as they add up, the disc eventually begins to suffer from the wear and tear and begins to degenerate. As the disc space collapses and loses height, stability can be lost and the nerves housed in the spinal canal can become compressed. It is important to remember that disc degeneration is part of the natural process of aging and does not necessarily lead to low back pain.

The intervertebral disc (a gel-like disc between each vertebra) is one structure that is prone to degenerative changes through wear and tear. Long before disc degeneration can be seen on an X-ray, it may be causing changes in your body.



Bone spurs, sometimes called **osteophytes**, may begin to form around the disc space. This is thought to be due to the body's response to try to stop the movement at this spinal level. The spurs can become a problem if they start to grow into the spinal canal and press on the spinal nerves or spinal cord. This condition is called Spinal Stenosis and, many times, accompanies Degenerative Disc Disease as a part of aging.



This brochure is not a substitute for medical care. It has been developed by your physician to help you better understand your spine condition, surgery and post-operative instructions. Please be advised that the statements made within this brochure are intended for general information use only. Your condition or course of treatment may vary. Please check with your physician for variances.