

Glossary

Annular tear	A spinal disease process in which a tear or tears form in the annulus fibrosus of an intervertebral disc.
Annulus fibrosus	The outer rim or circumferential portion of a disc.
Anterolisthesis	See Spondylolisthesis.
Anterior longitudinal ligament:	A continuous ligament connecting the spinal discs and vertebrae that runs along the anterior aspect (front) of the spine.
Arachnoid (mater)	The middle of the three membranes (meninges) that cover the brain and spinal cord. The arachnoid mater is itself separated into two layers which are connected by thin web-like strands, and between which (called the subarachnoid space) is found cerebrospinal fluid.
Bulging disc	See Degenerative Spine Disease
Cauda equina	The nerve roots from L1 to the coccyx (Latin for “horse’s tail”).
Cauda equina syndrome	Irritation, inflammation, compression, or injury to the nerve roots of the cauda equina, that may cause pain, numbness, weakness, paralysis of the legs, and/or loss of bowel, bladder and sexual function.
Cerebrospinal fluid	A thin, clear fluid in the ventricles and subarachnoid spaces of the brain and spinal cord.
Cervical spine	The spinal column of the neck. There are 7 cervical vertebrae.
Coccyx	Tailbone, lowest part of the spinal column, with 4 fused coccygeal vertebrae
Compression fracture	Fracture of the vertebral body, commonly seen in osteoporosis.
Deformity	Abnormal curvature and/or alignment of the spine.
Degenerative disc disease	See Degenerative Spine Disease
Degenerative	Global ageing or wearing-out process of the spine characterized by facet joint inflammation, disc

spine disease	inflammation, bulging and buckling of the ligaments, osteophyte formation (growth of bone spurs), spinal stenosis, and spinal deformity. Also known as degenerative disc disease, degenerative joint disease of the spine, spinal arthritis/osteoarthritis and spondylosis.
Disc	Cushion-like structure between two vertebrae (bones) of the spinal column. Discs are named according to which two vertebrae they are between, e.g. 'the C3-4 disc.' Composed of the outer annulus fibrosus and inner nucleus pulposus, two types of cartilage.
Discogenic pain	Pain from a degenerative intervertebral disc itself, as opposed to pain from nerve compression.
Dura (mater)	The outer most of the three membranes (meninges) that cover the brain and spinal cord.
Epidural space	The space or potential space outside dura and inside the spinal canal.
Facet joint(s)	Paired, posterior-lateral joints connecting one vertebra to the next. A facet joint comprises the superior articular facet of the inferior vertebra, joined to the inferior articular facet of the superior vertebra, by the facet joint capsule.
Facet joint capsules	Ligaments surrounding and holding together the facet joints.
Herniated Disc	A spinal disease in which a fragment of nucleus pulposus herniates through a tear in the annulus fibrosus of an intervertebral disc.
Hyperkyphosis	Abnormal, exaggerated curvature of the spine in which the convex portion of the curve is posterior, concave anterior.
Hyperlordosis	Abnormal, exaggerated curvature of the spine in which the convex portion of the curve is anterior, concave posterior.
Interspinous ligament	A discontinuous ligament or chain of ligaments that stretch from the inferior aspect of one vertebral spinous process to the superior aspect of the next inferior spinous process.
Intervertebral disc	See Disc.

Lamina	The posterior portion of the vertebra on which the spinous process is based.
Lateral listhesis	Sideways slippage of one vertebra on the next.
Ligamentum flavum	A discontinuous ligament or chain of ligaments that stretch from the inferior aspect of one vertebral lamina to the superior aspect of the next inferior lamina.
Lordosis	Curvature of the spine in which the convex portion of the curve is anterior, concave posterior.
Lumbar spine	The spinal column of the lower back. There are 5 lumbar vertebrae.
Meninges	The three membranes surrounding the nerves, spinal cord and brain. Divided into pia mater, arachnoid mater and dura mater.
Myelopathy	Irritation, inflammation, compression or injury of the spinal cord. In myelopathy there may be pain, numbness, weakness, paralysis of the arms and legs and/or loss of bowel, bladder and sexual function.
Nerve root	The portion of each spinal nerve from the spinal cord to the neural foramen.
Neural foramen(s)	The paired openings down either side of the spinal canal where the spinal nerves enter/exit at each vertebral level.
Nucleus pulposus	The inner or center portion of the disc.
Osteophyte	Bone spur that develops in degenerative spine disease process.
Osteoporosis	Loss of bone density.
Pars Interarticularis	The region on the posterior aspect of a vertebra situated in between the facet joints.
Paraspinous muscles	The muscles of the spine.
Pedicle(s)	The paired portions of the vertebra connecting the vertebral body to the connecting points of the laminae, transverse processes and superior articular facets.

Peripheral nerve	The nerves from (and to) the spinal cord to (and from) all parts of the body.
Pia (mater)	The inner most of the three membranes (meninges) that cover the brain and spinal cord.
Posterior longitudinal ligament	A continuous ligament connecting the spinal discs and vertebrae that runs along the posterior aspect of the vertebral bodies and discs.
Radiculopathy	Irritation, inflammation, compression, or injury to a nerve root. In radiculopathy there may be pain in the part of the body that the nerve goes to, numbness or tingling in the area of skin that the nerve goes to, and/or weakness of the muscles that the nerve goes to.
Retrolisthesis	Backward (posterior) slippage of one vertebra on the next lower vertebra.
Sacroiliac joint	Paired joints attaching the sacrum to the rest of the pelvis.
Sacrum (sacral spine)	The spinal column of the sacral region. There are 5 (fused) sacral vertebrae.
Sciatica	Pain (radiculopathy) down the leg.
Scoliosis	Sideways curvature of the spine.
Spinal canal	The canal or central opening inside a vertebra. The spinal canal runs the length of the vertebral column, and contains the spinal cord, nerve roots and cauda equina.
Spinal column	See Spine.
Spinal cord	A large nerve bundle, an extension of the brain, found in the spinal canal from C1 to L1.
Spinal stenosis	Constriction around, and compression of, the nerve roots, spinal cord or cauda equina in the spinal canal and/or neural foramens.
Spinal nerves	Nerves that enter/exit the spine at each vertebral level via the neural foramina.
Spine	Spinal column, vertebral column, backbone. The vertebrae and discs.

Spondylolisthesis	Anterolisthesis. Forward (anterior) slippage of one vertebra on the next lower vertebra.
Spondylolysis	Separation of a vertebra due to disruption of the pars interarticularis bilaterally. That part superior to the disruption comprises the pedicle/vertebral body/superior articular facet complex. That part inferior to the disruption comprises the lamina/spinous process/inferior articular facet complex.
Spondylosis	See Degenerative Spine Disease
Supraspinous ligament	A continuous ligament that stretches along the posterior aspects of the spinous processes.
Thoracic spine	The spinal column of the thoracic (chest) region. There are 12 thoracic vertebrae.
Transverse Process(es)	The paired laterally oriented bony processes of a vertebra.
Vertebra(e)	The bone(s) of the spine.
Vertebral body	Vertebral corpus. The portion of the vertebra to which attach the intervertebral discs.
Vertebral corpus	See Vertebral Body.
Vertebral column	See Spine.
Vertebral foramen	See Spinal Canal.