

# Herniated Disk in Lower Back: *Treatment Options*

**A slipped (herniated) disk is a problem with a cushion (disk) between the bones in your back and causes back or leg pain, or numbness and tingling in your legs.**

*This decision aid is not for people with back pain from other causes, a herniated disk without symptoms, or symptoms for less than 6 weeks.*

Patient Questions	Shots in your back (epidural injections)	Surgery (open surgery)	Minimally invasive surgery
<b>What does the treatment involve?</b>	A steroid shot is injected into your back to try to reduce swelling. It takes about an hour. You may need a driver to get home. Discuss costs.	Part of your disk is removed to reduce pressure on the nerves. Surgery takes about 2 hours and you may go home later that day. Discuss costs.	Part of your disk is removed to reduce pressure on the nerves. There is less damage to muscles nearby. Surgery takes about 1 hour and you may go home later that day. Discuss costs.
<b>Will it help my pain?</b>	You may have less pain in 2 weeks or so. Pain will not be less in the long term compared to not having shots.	You may take 2 to 6 weeks to get better. Up to 95 out of 100 people (95%) get better, whether or not they have surgery.	You may take 2 to 8 weeks to get better. Results may be as good as with open surgery.
<b>Might I get surgery later?</b>	About 12 out of 100 people (12%) have surgery by 1 year.	Up to 16 out of 100 people (16%) may have repeat surgery to treat pain that continues or comes back.	From 10 to 45 out of 100 people (10% to 45%) have repeat surgery to treat pain that continues or comes back.
<b>What are the side effects?</b>	Up to 13 out of 100 people (13%) may have worse pain, headache, flushing in the face, or change in voice that lasts for a few hours or days.	Out of 100 people, about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30 (30%) have pain at site of surgery for a day or so</li> <li>• 20 (20%) have back or leg pain for up to 3 weeks</li> <li>• 20 (20%) have nausea</li> <li>• 20 (20%) have muscle spasm or cramps</li> </ul>	Out of 100 people, about <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30 (30%) have pain running down the leg for up to 3 weeks</li> <li>• 7 (7%) have a burning feeling in the back for up to 2 months</li> </ul>
<b>What are the risks?</b>	Up to 3 out of 100 people (3%) may have heavy bleeding or infection.	Out of 100 people, about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 (4%) have nerve damage</li> <li>• 4 (4%) have the disk slip again</li> <li>• 2 (2%) have an infection</li> </ul>	Out of 100 people, about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7 (7%) have nerve damage</li> <li>• 7 (7%) have the disk slip again</li> <li>• 2 (2%) have an infection</li> </ul>
<b>When will I recover?</b>	You can be back to your usual activities the next day.	You can walk by 24 hours, and some return to usual activities by 2 weeks.	You can walk by 24 hours, and some return to usual activities by 2 weeks.

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NOTE: The following options were available but not selected when this decision aid was generated:

### **Treatment without surgery**

*Option Grid offers frequent content updates to reflect the latest evidence.*

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View this customized decision aid online: <https://optiongrid.ebsco.com/a/41ppbd>

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