

Minimally Invasive Discectomy

What is it?

Lumbar microdiscectomy is an operation on the lumbar spine performed using a surgical microscope and microsurgical techniques. A microdiscectomy requires only a very small incision and will remove only that portion of your ruptured disc which is "pinching" one or more spinal nerve roots. The recovery time for this particular surgery is usually much less than is required for traditional lumbar surgery.

Why is it done?

Lumbar microdiscectomy is usually recommended only when specific conditions are met. In general, surgery is recommended when a ruptured disc is pinching a spinal nerve root(s) and you have:

1. Leg pain which limits your normal daily activities
2. Weakness in your leg(s) or feet
3. Numbness in your extremities
4. Impaired bowel and/or bladder function

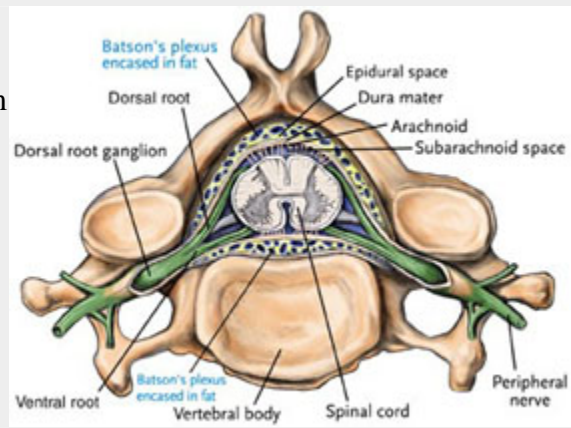
The Operation

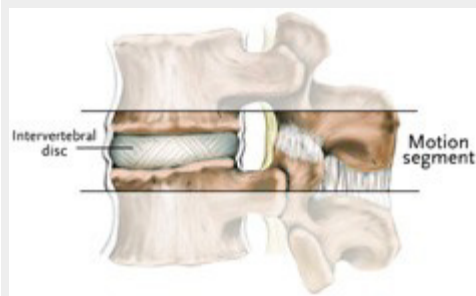
Incision

In the operating room, a lumbar microdiscectomy begins with a small incision in your lower back. Through this opening, your surgeon will insert microsurgical instruments. Because the work is viewed through a microscope, this approach requires a relatively small incision.

Reaching the "Pinched" Nerve

Guided by diagnostic studies, Dr. Chang will remove a small portion of bony material from the back of your vertebra. Once this material is removed, the surgeon can locate the exact area where the nerve root is being pinched.





Identifying the Cause of the Pressure

Once the "pinched" nerve is located, the extent of the pressure on the nerve can be determined. Using microsurgical procedures, your surgeon will remove the ruptured portion of the disc and any disc fragments which have broken off from the main disc. The amount of work required to complete your microdiscectomy will depend in part on the number of disc fragments present and the difficulty presented in finding and removing them.

Closing the Incision

The operation is completed when each layer of the incision is repaired, and the skin is closed with an underneath dissolving suture that does not need to be removed in the office. The incision will be covered with steri-strips.