An introduction to

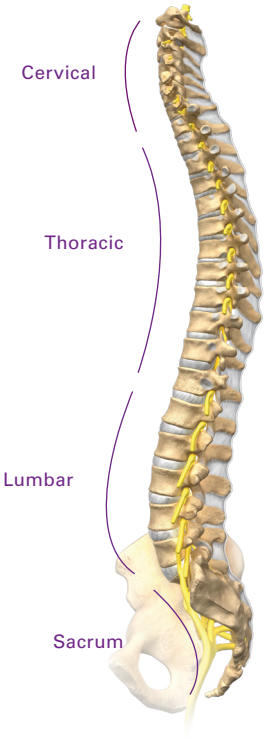
Myelopathy

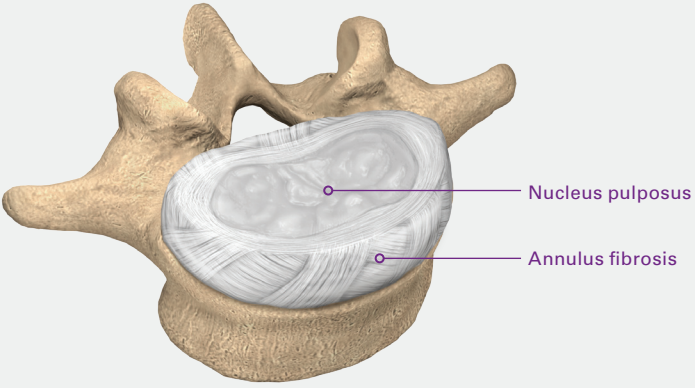
This booklet provides general information on myelopathy. It is not meant to replace any personal conversations that you might wish to have with your physician or other member of your healthcare team. Not all the information here will apply to your individual treatment or its outcome.

About the spine

The human spine is made up of 24 bones or vertebrae in the cervical (neck) spine, the thoracic (chest) spine, and the lumbar (lower back) spine, plus the sacral bones.

Vertebrae are connected by several joints, which allow you to bend, twist, and carry loads. The main joint between two vertebrae is called an intervertebral disc. The disc is made of two parts, a tough and fibrous outer layer (annulus fibrosis) and a soft, gelatinous center (nucleus pulposus). These two parts work in conjunction to allow the spine to move, and also provide shock absorption.



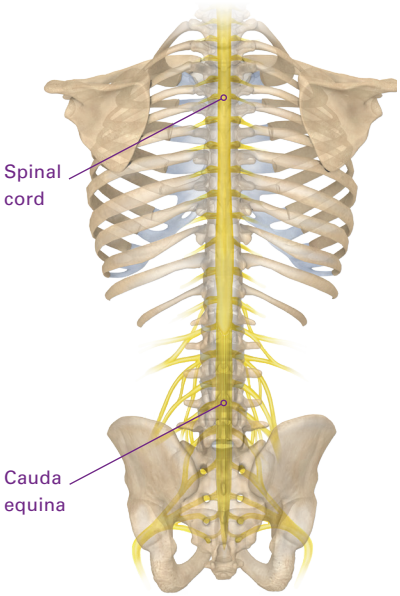


About the spinal cord

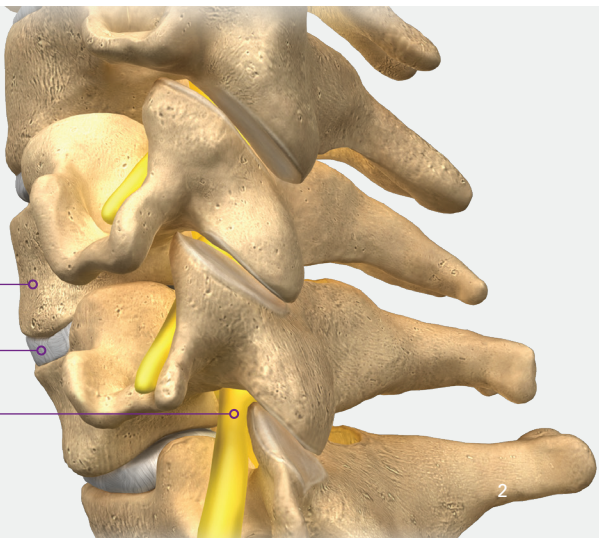
Each vertebra has an opening (vertebral foramen) through which a tubular nervous structure travels. Beginning at the base of the brain to the upper-lumbar spine, this structure is called the spinal cord.

Below the spinal cord, in the lumbar spine, the nerve roots that exit the spinal cord continue to travel through the vertebral foramen as a bundle known as the cauda equina.

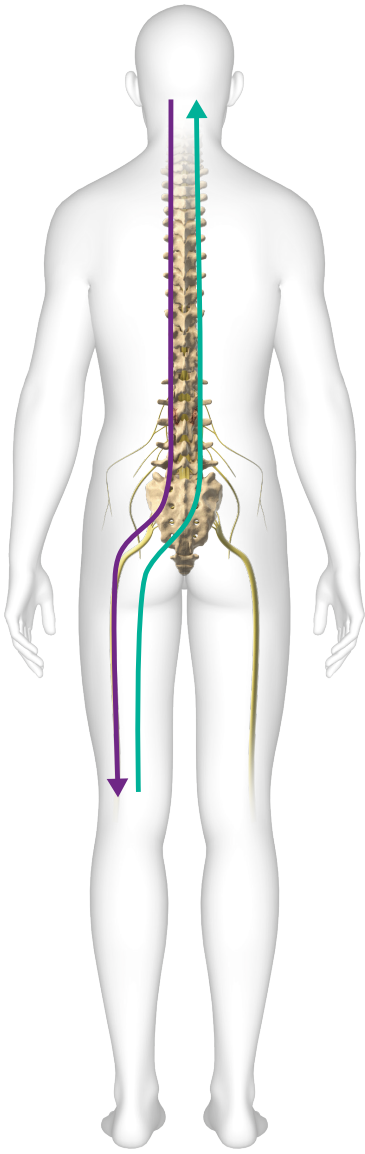
At each level of the spine, spinal nerves exit the bony spine then extend throughout the body.



Side view of the cervical spine



Three important functions of the spinal cord are to:



1. Send motor information from the brain to the body allowing it to move.
2. Send sensory information from the body to the brain to allow feeling.
3. Coordinate reflexes.

What is myelopathy?

Myelopathy is a symptom of an underlying spinal condition that compresses or irritates the spinal cord. When the spinal cord is injured, the body and brain cannot communicate with each other properly and this inefficiency can be displayed as myelopathy. The symptom can present as:

- The feeling of heavy limbs
- Difficulty balancing
- Muscle weakness
- Loss of coordination
- Loss of bladder/bowel control

What can cause myelopathy?

Myelopathy is most commonly the result of:

- Degenerative disc disease
- Spinal stenosis
- Tumor
- Trauma

If you feel that you are experiencing myelopathy, you should see a physician for an accurate diagnosis.

Notes

Resources

For information on spinal procedures and conditions, please visit:
nuvasive.com

If you would like to learn more about patient support and education for chronic back, leg, and neck pain sufferers and their loved ones, please visit:
thebetterwayback.org

If you have any questions about myelopathy or spine surgery, please call or visit your physician, who is the only one qualified to diagnose and treat your spinal condition. This patient information brochure is not a replacement for professional medical advice.

About The Better Way Back®

The Better Way Back is a nationwide patient support program created by NuVasive®, a leader in developing minimally invasive, procedurally-integrated spine solutions. The Better Way Back is a free community built on the power of empathy, and is dedicated to providing hope, support, and information to individuals suffering from chronic back, leg, or neck pain.

Through its Patient Ambassador Program, The Better Way Back pairs patients considering spine surgery with patients who have previously undergone a spine procedure. Ambassadors volunteer their time to discuss their experiences in order to provide additional, first-hand perspectives.

To learn more about The Better Way Back, please

call **1-800-745-7099**

visit **thebetterwayback.org**

text "TBWB" to **858-360-8292**

Myelopathy

NuVasive, Inc.
7475 Lusk Blvd., San Diego, CA 92121
+1 800.475.9131

nuvasive.com

NUVASIVE