A guide for patients with lumbar disc prolapse

About the condition
Intervertebral discs separate the vertebrae (bony bits) in the low back. The disc is made of two parts. The centre, called the nucleus, is spongy and acts as a shock absorber. The nucleus is surrounded by the annulus, a series of strong connective tissue rings, which resist compression and rotational stresses.

In lumbar disc prolapse, part of the spongy nucleus may protrude through the annulus and cause pain. If the prolapse increases, there may be pressure on the nerve behind the disc which can give pain, tingling or numbness, and sometimes weakness in the leg.

Disc prolapse in the lumbar spine can happen with strain or injury to the back, often with bad lifting and twisting. Usually there are pre-existing problems in the disc related to posture, previous injury or degenerative changes.

Symptoms
- Stiffness.
- Pain in the lower back.
- Restriction in movement.
- Pain referred into the buttock and leg.
- Tingling, numbness and sometimes weakness in the leg.

What you can do to help
- Always maintain good posture. Look at your work posture.
- Avoid staying in one position for too long. Keep moving.
- Take care when lifting or carrying as it can put a strain on your back. Always bend at the knees.
- Regularly carry out the exercises over the page as indicated by your physiotherapist.

Contact us

Customer Care Team
If you have a query about our health services, or would like to comment, compliment or complain about Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust, you can contact the Customer Care Team.

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Page 1 of 2
Exercises

Lying with your knees bent and feet on the floor. Lift your knees towards your chest.

Place your hands behind both knees and draw them towards your chest. Hold ________ secs.

Repeat _________ times.

Lying face down with both your hands at shoulder height.

Straighten your elbows and lift your upper trunk as far up as you can. Keep your pelvis and legs relaxed.

Repeat _________ times.

Stand straight with feet apart.

Support your back with your hands while bending your back as far backwards as possible. Keep your knees straight during the exercise.

Repeat _________ times.

Lying on your back with knees together and bent.

Slowly roll your knees from side to side keeping your upper trunk still.

Repeat _________ times.

Lying on your back with one leg bent.

Bring your bent knee over the other leg and push your knee against the floor with the opposite hand. Then reach with the other arm to the opposite side looking in the same direction. You will feel the stretching in your lower back and bottom. Hold approx. 20 secs. - relax.

Repeat _________ times.

START POSITION: Lie on back with legs bent and feet together.

Pull your belly button towards your spine without moving your back. Hold this position while breathing at a normal rate.

Hold for _________ secs.

Repeat _________ times.