



THE SPINE

Over the years all of us would have experienced some sort of back pain whether it be in the neck, between the shoulder blades or lower back.

It has been a mystery to many why it happens or how we fix it.

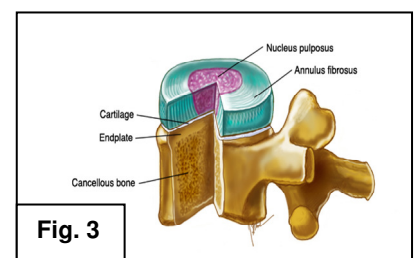
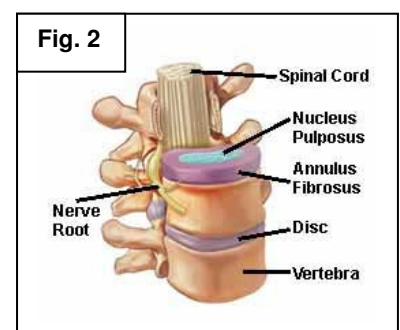
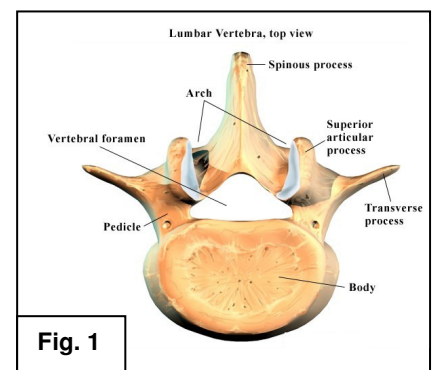
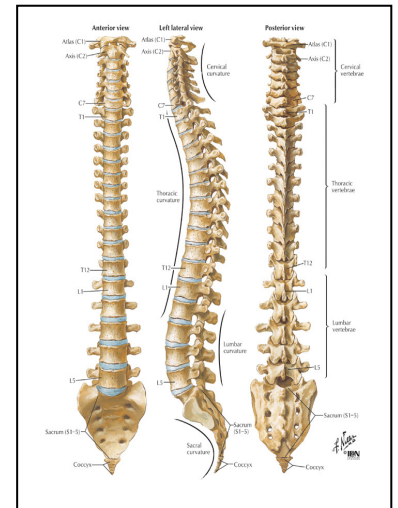
Some people are lucky their pain may settle quickly, others may have a tougher job of resolving it and getting back into the life “before it all started”.

Spine pain presents in many areas and in many forms, e.g. pain from the neck could radiate into your hands or even down to the nipple line, lower back pain could refer into your toes or your perineum.

A spinal unit comprises of two vertebrae (bone), Fig. 1, and a gelatinous disc structure (shock absorber), Fig. 2. This is made up of the nucleus and the very strong outer core (the annulus). It is important to note that these structures run close to the spinal cord and the nerve roots. The nerves are very important as they carry the nerve impulses to muscles (to make them work) and they also give sensory information back to the brain, Fig. 3.

It is interesting to note that human beings spend a lot of their lives bending forward or in other off centre positions. This immediately puts the spinal unit into a compromising position. For example, sitting, bending over a low bench, picking something off the floor will cause the nucleus of the disc to put a lot of pressure on the strong annulus. Sometimes after repeated or heavy loading it can break through and in turn press on the nerves. Depending on the degree of the bulge, it can cause referred pain which means the pain can travel down the limbs from the back, Fig. 4. In other people the joints can develop arthritic projections called osteophytes. These can also “pinch” on the nerves but the conservative treatment will be different to pinching from a disc.

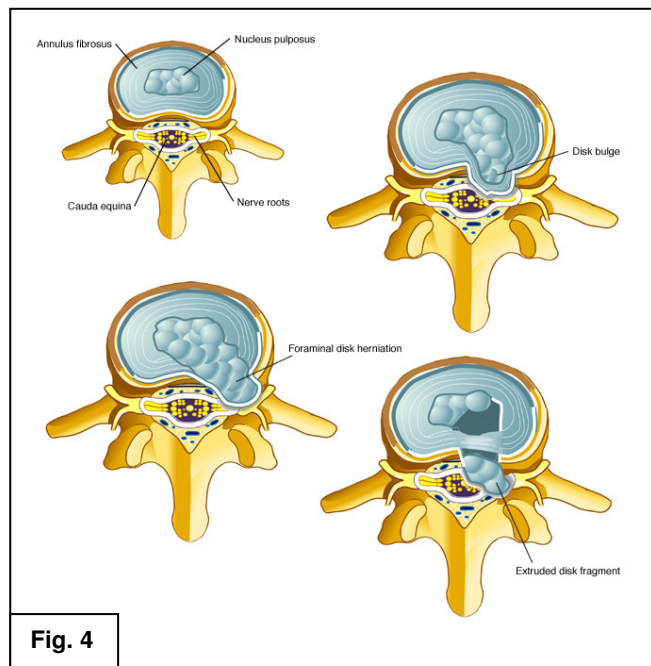
In a lot of cases the types of pains can be corrected by a ‘spine physiotherapist’ who has a lot of experience treating these areas.



When you have treatment the physiotherapist will need help from yourself doing the appropriate exercises and putting into practice, correct postural patterns at home. (See Postural Report)

There are many things that can go wrong with the spine, including birth deformities, wear and tear, disc bulges, poor postural patterns, shortening of soft tissue structures around the spine, weakening of the small postural muscles, inflammation of soft tissue structures – so with all these and others it is evident that a good diagnostician is important.

Tools such as x-ray, MRI, CT scan can be incorporated into good thorough assessment.



If you are one of the lucky ones where your pain settles in a few days – don't be fooled this could be the precursor to a bigger problem. It is of benefit to understand why this happened as with a little knowledge you are able to prevent a bigger problem later.

It is always better to stop an issue before it turns into a big problem. I guess the long and the short of spine pain is – get some excellent advice so you can look after yourself before the pain becomes a bigger issue. We would love to help you.

Prevention is always better than the unknown.