

Degenerative Cervical Myelopathy

Patient Information Leaflet



Websites:

Ortho Spine Surgeon: <http://spine.co.nz/>

MSK Physiotherapist: <https://www.rohilchauhan.com/>

Global Myelopathy organization: <https://myelopathy.org/>

Introduction

- DCM is a relatively rare, but potentially serious condition
- It involves compression of the spinal cord in the neck region
- This can lead to a wide range of symptoms including, but not limited to, balance disturbances and hand and leg weakness and numbness.

The purpose of this patient education sheet is to provide you with information about DCM and its management.

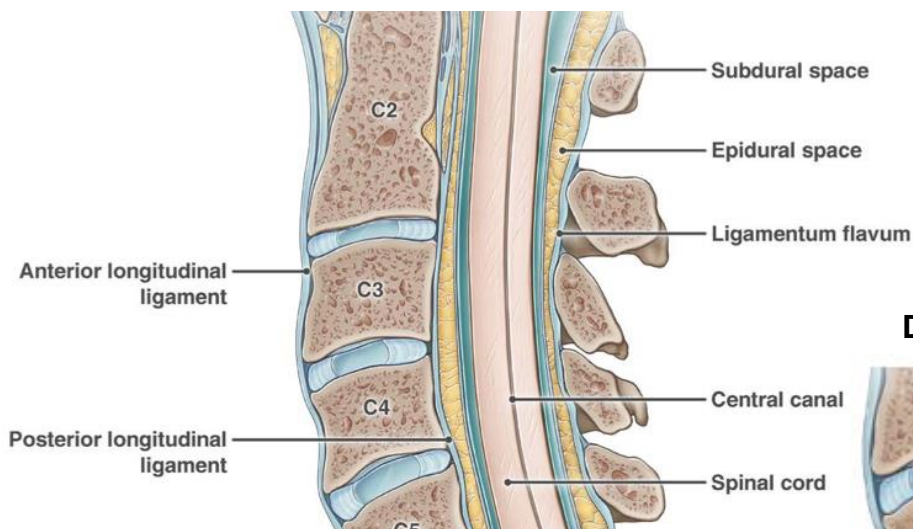
What is Degenerative Cervical Myelopathy (DCM)?

- DCM is caused by age related changes in the bones, discs and ligaments in the neck
- This can lead to compression of the spinal cord.
- The condition is more common in older adults.

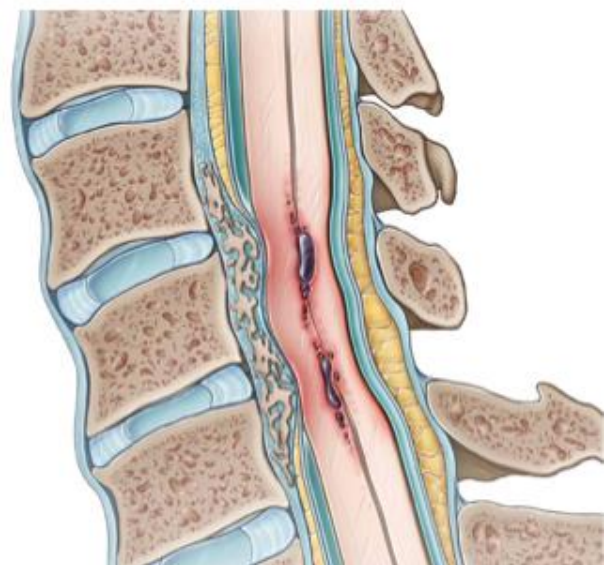
The **Spinal Cord** is like a bridge connecting the brain to the rest of our body.

- It helps signals travel between the brain and the body through special cells called neurons.
- The spinal cord also helps us sense things in our body and coordinate our movements.
- If it undergoes strain or stress, it can impact how we move and feel.

Normal Cervical Spine



Degenerative Cervical Myelopathy



Symptoms	May affect your ability to..
Numbness and/or tingling in the arms, hands, or fingers	Handle and put on small jewelry on yourself. Do up your buttons.
Weakness in the arms and hands	Maintain a strong grip with your hands. Changes to handwriting accuracy or using kitchen utensils and chopsticks.
Difficulty with coordination and/or balance	Walking in a straight line, walk unsupported or tripping/falls
Stiffness or pain in the neck	Fully move your head in all directions
Problems with bladder and/or bowel control	Sudden urges to go to the toilet without much notice and inability to control these urges.

Treatment:

The treatment is dependent on the severity of your symptoms and scans. Based on your condition, the specialist may recommend a combination of treatment options including, but not limited to:

- Active monitoring: you might be suggested to monitor your symptoms and return for follow up consultation in due course to reassess the need for further treatment.
- Injections: this helps with referred arm pain but not the compression of the spinal cord.
- Physiotherapy: for pain management, trunk and limb strength and coordination exercises.
- Surgery: surgical treatment is aimed at stopping the progression of spinal cord deterioration and preventing further dysfunction.
 - Recovery in symptoms is possible, but not guaranteed.

Will my condition continue to get worse?

- Myelopathy is a progressive condition which can get worse, in a stepwise fashion.
- That means, decline can be rapid from a previous state of normal function.
- Once there has been a decline, recovery in function is not guaranteed.
- If you develop rapid deterioration of the above symptoms seek emergency medical attention.

What do I need to avoid doing?

- Avoid falls
 - Switch on your room lights when getting up in the night to visit the toilet
 - Clear objects away from chairs/bed to decrease trip/fall hazards
- Avoid cervical manipulation/clicking/cracking - avoid rapid neck twisting/cracking techniques by therapists

Disclaimer:

This material is for informational purposes only. It does not replace the advice or counsel of a doctor or health care professional. You should consult with, and rely only on the advice of, your physician or health care professional. If you develop rapid deterioration of the above symptoms seek emergency medical attention.

To learn more about DCM, follow the link below:

→ <https://myelopathy.org/>