

Herniated Disk

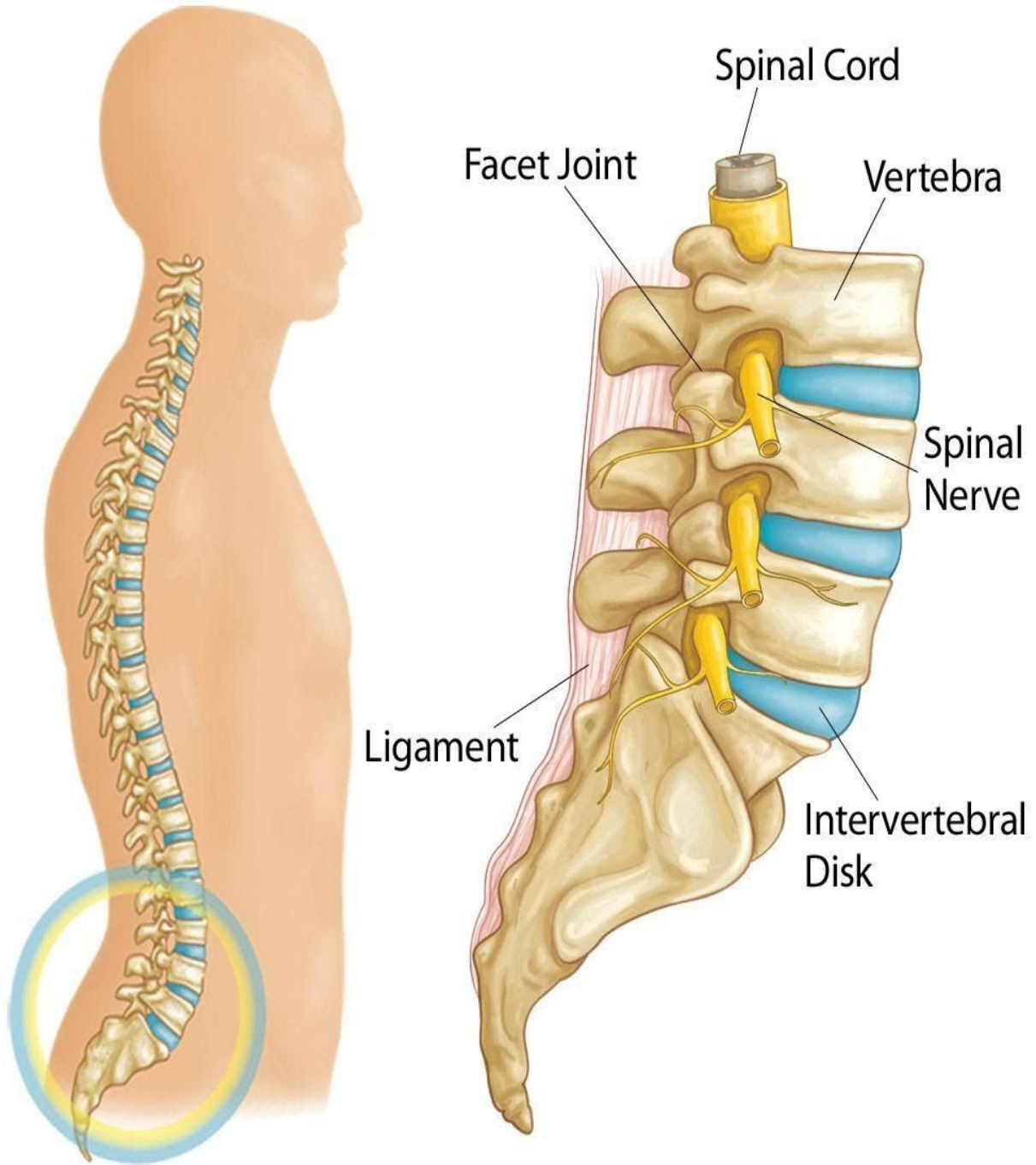
A herniated disk refers to a problem with one of the rubbery cushions (disks) that sit between the individual bones (vertebrae) that stack to make your spine.

A spinal disk has a soft, jellylike center (nucleus) encased in a tougher, rubbery exterior (annulus). Sometimes called a slipped disk or a ruptured disk, a herniated disk occurs when some of the

nucleus pushes out through a tear in the annulus.

A herniated disk, which can occur in any part of the spine, can irritate a nearby nerve.

Depending on where the herniated disk is, it can result in pain, numbness or weakness in an arm or leg.



Symptoms

Most herniated disks occur in the lower back, although they can also occur in the neck. Signs and symptoms depend on where the disk is situated and whether the disk is pressing on a nerve. They usually affect one side of the body.

- **Arm or leg pain.** If your herniated disk is in your lower back, you'll typically

feel the most pain in your buttocks, thigh and calf. You might have pain in part of the foot, as well. If your herniated disk is in your neck, you'll typically feel the most pain in your shoulder and arm. This pain might shoot into your arm or leg when you cough, sneeze or move into certain positions. Pain is

often described as sharp or burning.

- **Numbness or tingling.** People who have a herniated disk often have radiating numbness or tingling in the body part served by the affected nerves.
- **Weakness.** Muscles served by the affected nerves tend to weaken. This can cause

you to stumble, or affect your ability to lift or hold items.

You can have a herniated disk without symptoms. You might not know you have it unless it shows up on a spinal image.

