

SPINAL CANAL STENOSIS

WHAT IS IT?

The bony canal where the spinal cord and nerves travel through becomes narrowed.

WHAT WILL I FEEL?

Pain, numbness, and cramping in the thighs and calves. You may also experience symptoms in the groin area or sudden giving way of the legs when walking. These symptoms come and go depending on your activity.

WHAT CAUSES IT?

The normal aging process may lead to arthritis and bony spurring in the joints and degenerative changes in the discs of the low back.

WHY DOES IT HURT WHEN I WALK?

Walking is an activity that causes the low back to extend or arch backwards. Extension narrows the size of the spinal canal in the low back causing more pressure on the nerves. Flexion, or bending forward increases the size of the canal and relieves the pressure on the nerves.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MYSELF?

- **Modify your Activities**

Avoid movements that cause long periods of extension:

Prolonged standing

Reaching overhead

Prolonged walking, especially downhill

- Wear **Supportive Shoes** – with good arch supports and cushions. Avoid high heels.

- A **Walker** may be necessary when walking longer distances. It will allow you to bend forward while walking.

- **Exercise** - Do the exercises listed on the back of this form to control your ability to maintain flexion and avoid extension of the spine.

Stretching the muscles around the hip – When these muscles are tight, they pull your back into more extension when you walk

Stretching the muscles of the thigh and calf – will give relief to muscles that cramp.

Strengthening the abdominal muscles – will help you to keep your spine more flexed as you stand and walk

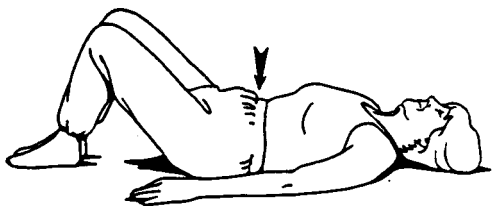
Riding a bicycle – may be tolerated very well and will allow you to maintain aerobic fitness and strengthen your leg muscles.

EXERCISES

- Do the exercises **2X each day.** 3 repetitions each. Hold stretches for **20 seconds.**
- All exercises must be done **PAIN-FREE.** Feeling a stretching or pulling sensation is OK.
- Stop doing any single exercise if it immediately increases your pain.
- If you have increased **pain that lasts more than 1 hour** after finishing the exercises, you need to decrease the number of repetitions of each exercise.

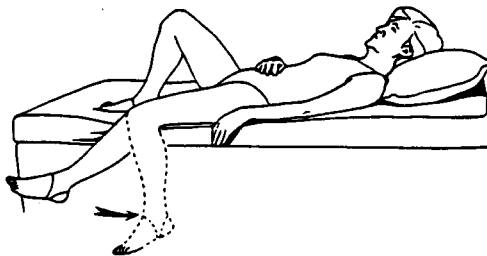
Pelvic Tilt

With knees bent and feet flat, tighten stomach muscles and roll pelvis flattening the low back into the bed.



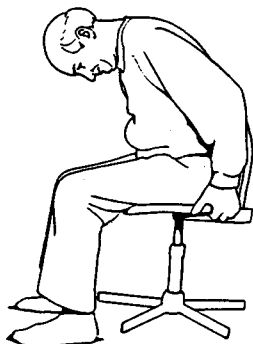
Hip Flexor Stretch

While maintaining the pelvic tilt, slowly lower leg over edge of bed until a stretch is felt in the front of the hip.



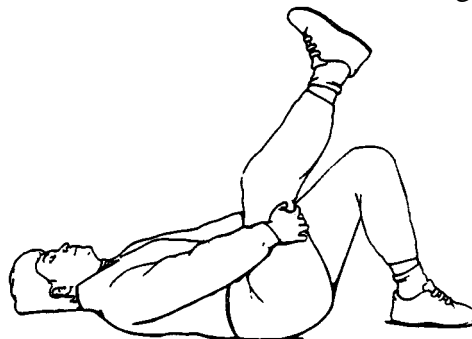
Sitting - Forward Lean

Lean forward until a stretch is felt in the lower back.



Hamstring Stretch

Holding onto the back of the thigh (use a belt or towel if unable to reach thigh), lift the lower leg until a stretch is felt in the back of the thigh.



Standing - Pelvic Tilt

Stand with feet about 12 inches from wall with knees bent slightly and flatten low back against the wall.



Calf Stretch

Stand holding onto chair, one leg forward, one behind, lean forward keeping back heel touching.

