

Foraminal Stenosis

TERMINOLOGY

- Neuroforaminal narrowing
- Spinal stenosis
- Lateral stenosis
- Neuroforaminal spondylosis

INTRODUCTION

Spinal stenosis refers to narrowing of spaces in the spine (backbone) that can result in pressure on the spinal cord and/or nerve roots. This disorder usually involves the narrowing of one or more areas of the spine: (1) the canal in the center of the column of bones (vertebral or spinal column) through which the spinal cord and nerve roots run, (2) the openings between vertebrae (bones of the spine) through which nerves leave the spine and go to other parts of the body. The narrowing may involve one or more of the openings in the spine and may involve one or more segments of the spine.

At every level of the spine the spinal nerves will exit through a small canal referred to as the lateral foramen or neuroforamen. Foraminal stenosis refers to narrowing of this canal. Pressure on the spinal nerve root may give rise to pain, numbness and or muscle weakness in the involved extremity. More than 70% of cases of foraminal stenosis will occur at the lowest lumbar level of the back.

PREVALENCE

Foraminal stenosis represents the most common form of spinal stenosis. Most individuals over 60 years of age have foraminal stenosis at one of more levels of the spine. In most cases, the narrowing does not contribute to compression or injury of the traversing spinal nerve. This form of stenosis occurs more frequently in the neck and low back regions. This disorder is most common in men and women over 50 years of age. However, it may occur in younger people who are born with a narrowing of the spinal canal or who suffer an injury to the spine.