

CERVICAL LAMINECTOMY

A guide for patients

Cervical laminectomy is one of the surgical procedures used to treat symptoms related to nerve root or spinal cord compression. Symptoms of nerve root compression can present as pain, numbness, tingling, weakness and clumsiness of the upper extremities.

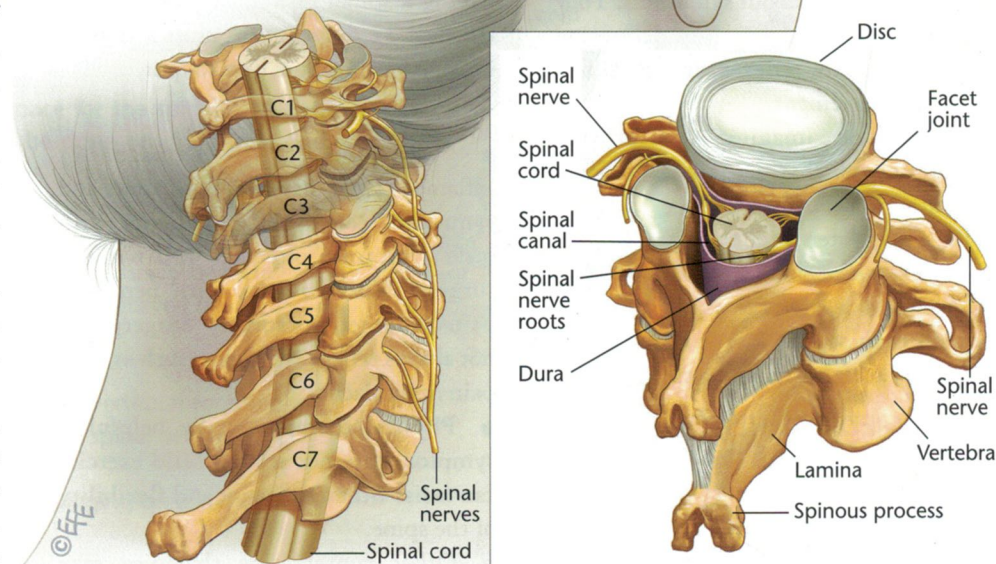
If there is pressure on the spinal cord, the symptoms can include changes in sensation involving the torso, difficulty with walking, and bowel/bladder dysfunction. These symptoms can be associated with a combination of neck pain, shoulder pain, pain between shoulder blades, and headaches.

Surgery can remove the pressure on nerves and spinal cord by opening the spinal canal and widening it from the back. The surgeon removes the lamina and spinous process (the bony roof protecting the spinal cord) and the soft tissue (ligament) pressing on the affected spinal nerves. This creates more space around the spinal cord and the nerve roots. This may reduce inflammation and irritation associated with compression.

Cervical laminectomies are typically performed to treat spinal canal stenosis. This is a narrowing of the spinal canal that contains the spinal cord and the spinal nerves. Spinal stenosis occurs mainly in older patients due to age-related changes such as:

- osteoarthritis of the spine and degenerative changes in the facet joints of the cervical vertebrae (facet joints link vertebrae together and are susceptible to arthritis, like other joints in the body)
- enlargement of the facet joints
- thickening of facet-joint tissue due to chronic inflammation

Normal anatomy of cervical vertebrae



- formation of bone spurs (osteophytes) on a vertebra caused by friction between inefficient, ageing facet joints
- thickening, hardening and calcification of ligaments of the spine
- thinning of intervertebral discs, which leads to less space between vertebrae, resulting in smaller intervertebral foramina for spinal nerves to pass through. If a foramen becomes too small, its spinal nerve will be compressed or “pinched”
- herniated or bulging discs
- forward displacement or “slippage” of one vertebra over another (anterolisthesis). It is usually due to age-related degeneration but sometimes is seen after trauma to the spine.

The above conditions slowly cause a decrease in space around the spinal nerves

or spinal cord, increasing the risk of compression causing irritation and inflammation.

Other conditions that can lead to spinal stenosis include:

- rheumatoid arthritis of the spine
- epidural abscess
- spinal cord tumour
- Paget’s disease, which causes weak and deformed bones
- acute vertebral trauma
- congenital spinal stenosis
- scoliosis (curvature of the spine)
- achondroplasia (a hereditary condition of abnormal bone growth).

CERVICAL FORAMINOTOMY

Cervical foraminotomy is the removal of bone around the spinal nerve root as it exits the vertebra. Part of the lamina and the inner part of the facet joint are removed to create space around the foramen and reduce compression and irritation of the nerve root. The amount of bone removed is less than what is removed in a cervical laminectomy. Sometimes cervical foraminotomy can be combined with cervical laminectomy.

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TREATMENT INFORMATION PAMPHLET

PROCEDURE:.....

PATIENT'S NAME:.....

DOCTOR'S NAME:.....

EDITION NUMBER:.....**DATE:** (day).....(month).....(year).....

Your Neurosurgeon

