

### Thoracic (Mid-Back) Test:

#### **VERY IMPORTANT NOTE:**

*If you are experiencing chest pains, shortness of breath, a weak feeling in the rib cage, or numbness in the jaw or one of your arms, it is **VERY IMPORTANT** that you have your doctor do a complete exam of your heart. Although these are symptoms a person may experience with a herniated disc, these symptoms are very common with heart conditions, so make sure your doctor rules them out before you start to work at healing your herniated disc.*

Answer the following questions:

1. Are you able to pin point an exact event that caused your pain to begin (a car accident, twisting a certain way, lifting something, etc.)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

*In most cases of herniated discs, you can identify a specific event that caused it. If the pain began gradually over a period of time, and you can not identify a specific event that caused the pain to begin, it is less likely that a herniated disc is the cause of your pain. Keep going through the test, though, because we're interested in the overall result with this test.*

2. Does the pain start in your mid-back and then travel (either to the ribs, chest, shoulder, arm, etc.)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

*In most cases of herniated discs, the pain will start in the mid-back & then travel to another location because of the nerves that are aggravated. The most common locations for the pain to travel to are the ribs, chest, shoulder, and arm. When I say that the pain travels to the ribs or chest, what I mean is that the pain usually starts in the mid-back & travels all the way around the rib cage to the front of the chest.*

2. Does your pain feel like a burning sensation, numbness, tingling, or any combination of the three?

☐ Yes

☐ No

*Burning, numbness, tingling, or any combination of the three are the most common types of pain a person with a herniated disc will experience. This is because these types of pain are caused by the nerves being aggravated by the herniated disc.*

4. Do you experience any weakness in the chest (as though it feels hard to breathe), hands or arms (for example, do you have a hard time holding a pen to write, lifting a cup of coffee, etc.)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

***Weakness in the chest, arm or hand is a sign that the nerve being pinched by the herniated disc is getting worse. Typically you will feel pain and muscle spasms first, and if the condition worsens, you will start to experience weakness. It's absolutely necessary that you think about this because this will determine the treatment options that are available to you.***

5. Do you notice that your pain becomes worse when you cough, sneeze, laugh, or go to the bathroom?

☐ Yes

☐ No

***Coughing, sneezing, laughing, and going to the bathroom will increase the pressure in the disc, which causes it to bulge a little bit more on the nerve, which causes the pain to instantly worsen.***

6. Does your pain get worse when you bend your head forward (bring your chin to your chest), slouch, or reach forward with your arms?

☐ Yes

☐ No

***Bringing the chin to the chest, slouching, or reaching forward with your arms will force the disc to bulge slightly more, which puts a little more pressure on the nerve, causing the pain to get worse.***

7. You'll need a helper for this next one – sit down & look straight ahead. Have another individual place their hands on top of your head & gently push down. Did you feel pain during this procedure?

☐ Yes      ☐ No

If you are experiencing traveling pain (in the ribs, chest, shoulder, arm, etc.), did that pain get worse?

☐ Yes      ☐ No

***This is a test called an orthopedic test, which is basically just a type of exam that a doctor could do to help determine if you have a herniated disc. When a person pushes on the head, it puts extra pressure on the disc, which causes it to bulge slightly more, aggravating the nerve it is pinching on.***



8. While sitting, bend your head to the right side (bring your ear to your shoulder) – have your partner place one hand on the top of your left shoulder & the other hand on the left side of your skull. Have your partner gently push (stretching the neck). Did the pain get worse?

☐ Yes      ☐ No

Now, repeat this test on the other side. Did the pain get worse?

☐ Yes      ☐ No

If you are experiencing traveling pain (in the ribs, chest, shoulder, arm, etc.), did that pain get worse when you did this test on either side?

☐ Yes      ☐ No

***You may be wondering why I'm having you stress the neck, when your pain is in your mid-back. This is because the muscles of the mid-back actually travel up to the neck and skull. By stretching the muscles of the neck, this stretches into the mid-back, which places extra pressure on the disc.***

***When we place extra pressure on the disc, this will aggravate the nerve that's being pinched by the disc even more, which causes the pain you experience.***

9. This one is probably going to make you feel a bit silly, but it's one of the most important tests I'm going to have you do. Take in a deep breath, hold your breath in, and then push down in your stomach as if you're pushing to have a bowel movement. Did you feel your pain get worse?

☐ Yes      ☐ No

*This is a test called Valsalva's Maneuver. When you push in the abdomen, this adds extra pressure to the disc, making it bulge more, which causes you more pain. This test is essentially testing the same thing that you experience if you have pain when you cough, sneeze, laugh or go to the bathroom. This is one of the most reliable tests to determine if a person has a herniated disc or not.*

10. Lay on your back, and have your partner lift your head and bring your chin toward your chest. It's important that you relax and allow your partner to lift your head without your help. Did your pain get worse?

☐ Yes      ☐ No

*The most aggravating movement to a herniated disc in the mid- back is usually flexion (bringing the chin to the chest, or a slouching position). With this test, when your partner lifts your head, it puts extra pressure on the disc, which then aggravates the nerves.*

***VERY IMPORTANT NOTE:** If your knees buckle when your partner lifts your head during this test (the knees bend & the legs lift up off the bed – THIS WILL BE OUT OF YOUR CONTROL) – you need to see a doctor right away. This is very rare during this test, but if it does happen, this is a sign of spinal meningitis which is a very serious, life-threatening condition.*

*I just want to stress, though, that this response will be out of your control. Many people who suffer with a herniated disc (especially in the low back) will have a hard time laying flat on their back, so they will want to bend the knees to take the pressure off the back. However, this is within that person's control – they can make themselves lay flat without bending the knees, even though it's painful. With meningitis, this will not be the case – you won't be able to keep your knees flat on the bed, even if you try.*

How many of these questions did you answer "Yes" to? \_\_\_\_\_

## How To Grade Your Test:

Add up the number of “yes” answers. Obviously, the more times you answered yes, the more likely it is that you have a herniated disc, **and** it’s causing your pain.

No two people ever experience the same symptoms, even if they are suffering with the same condition. So, you may not answer yes to all of these questions, but if you answered yes to 5 or more, it is very likely that you are suffering with a herniated disc.

Unfortunately, herniated discs can be very tricky, and even if your doctor found that you have one on an MRI, it doesn’t necessarily mean that it is causing your pain. In fact, it has been said that over 50% of the population actually has a herniated disc, but it doesn’t cause any pain.

This is primarily because of the amount of space that is present behind the disc, where the nerves of the spine live. Some people are born with a larger space for the nerves, so even if a disc bulges, it would take extensive bulging before there would be enough pressure on the nerves to cause pain.

On the other hand, some people are born with a smaller space for the nerves. In this case, it doesn’t take much bulging of the disc to cause severe pain.

The good news is this – even if you take this test and end up deciding that a herniated disc is not the condition that is causing your pain, it is still very likely that you will experience relief by following the steps I outline in my book.

The majority of spinal conditions respond to the steps I outline there, primarily because my method is designed to address all of the tissues that affect the spine – the discs, nerves, muscles, ligaments, bones, and joints. It’s a comprehensive approach that will help just about anyone suffering with a spinal condition.

However, if you don’t experience relief from the instructions I recommend, make sure you see your doctor immediately for further evaluation.

If you answered yes to number 4, you need to be aware that your condition is very serious. If you are experiencing muscle weakness, there has been so much pressure on the nerves behind your herniated disc that the nerve is starting to die.

In this case especially, I would strongly encourage you to begin the process I outline in my book right away. You have a very short window to try and heal your herniated disc without the help of a doctor.

And, honestly, once a person begins to experience weakness, the problem has been there so long and become so severe that most of these cases require more drastic measures by a doctor. If you don't see a doctor at this point, you take the risk that you will permanently lose the strength in the muscles affected. So, if you are experiencing muscle weakness, I really do feel that it's best for you to at least consult a doctor.

I discuss the different types of doctors that work with herniated discs in my book if you need some guidance as far as which doctor to go to.

After taking this test, you should feel more confident in knowing what is causing your pain – is it the disc, or something else? Now that you have this baseline, you can start with the steps for healing outlined in my book. I'll be asking you to take this test again at different points along the way, because this will help you know how your disc is healing.