

# P.E.A.R.L.S. Practical Evidence About Real Life Situations



## Surgical discectomy can benefit some patients

Clinical Question	How effective are surgical interventions for lumbar disc prolapse?
Bottom Line	Surgical discectomy for carefully selected patients with sciatica due to lumbar disc prolapse provides faster relief from the acute attack than conservative management, although any positive or negative effects on the lifetime natural history of the underlying disc disease are still unclear.
Context	Prolapsed lumbar discs account for less than 5% of all low-back problems, but are the most common cause of sciatica. Ninety per cent of acute attacks of sciatica settle with non-surgical management.
Caveat	Microdiscectomy gives broadly comparable results to open discectomy. The evidence on other minimally invasive techniques remains unclear.
Reference	Gibson JNA et al. <b>Surgical interventions for lumbar disc prolapse. This contains 40 trials and 2 quasi-randomised trials with sizes ranging from 29 to about 200 participants.</b> Cochrane Reviews 2007, Issue 1.
Date (Author)	May 2007 (Brian R McAvoy)

NNT = numbers needed to treat to benefit one person

NNH = numbers needed to harm to benefit one person

Both NNT and NNH are only reported if the studies or pooling of studies is statistically significant

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