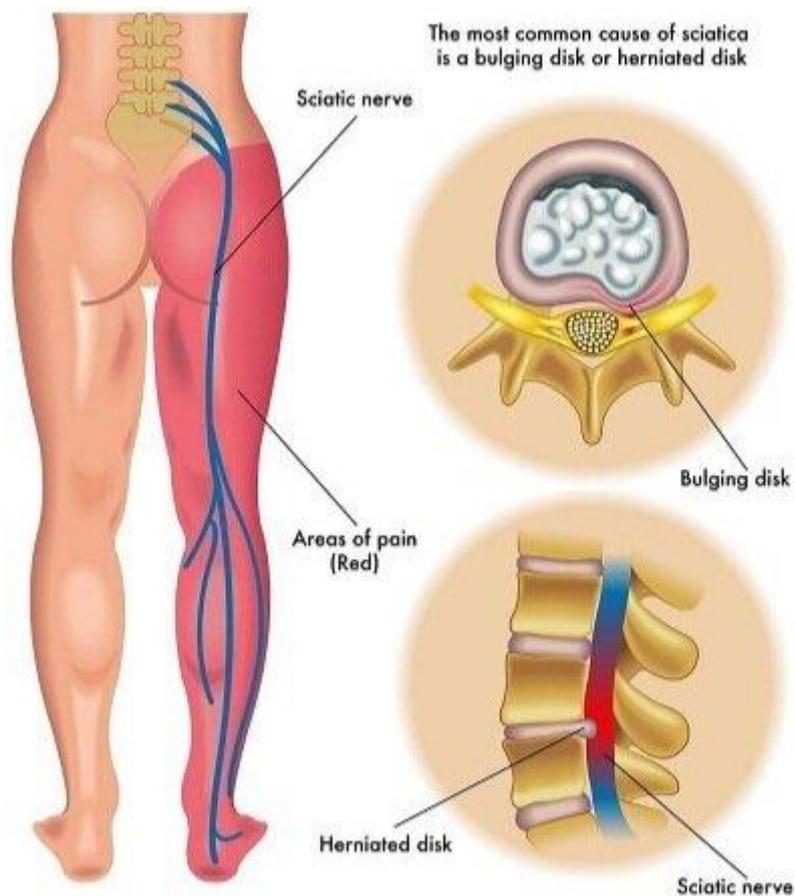


Slipped Disc (Herniated Disc)



What is a slipped disc?

A slipped disc is a common term used to describe a **disc herniation** or **disc prolapse**. Spinal discs are soft cushions that sit between the bones (vertebrae) of the spine and act as shock absorbers. A slipped disc occurs when part of the disc bulges or leaks out and irritates nearby nerves.

Despite the name, the disc does **not** actually slip out of place.

Where can it occur?

A slipped disc can occur anywhere in the spine, but it is most common in:

- The **lower back (lumbar spine)**
- The **neck (cervical spine)**

Common causes

- Age-related wear and tear of the spine
- Sudden heavy lifting or twisting
- Repetitive bending or strain
- Prolonged sitting or poor posture
- Occasionally following injury or accident

Common symptoms

Symptoms depend on whether a nearby nerve is affected and may include:

- Back or neck pain
- Pain spreading into the leg (sciatica) or arm
- Sharp, burning, or electric-like pain
- Numbness or tingling in the arm or leg
- Muscle weakness (less common)

Some people have a slipped disc without significant pain.

How is a slipped disc diagnosed?

Diagnosis is usually based on your symptoms and a physical examination. MRI scans are not routinely required unless symptoms are severe, worsening, or not improving with treatment.

What helps recovery?

Most slipped discs improve with **conservative treatment**.

Stay active

- Keep moving within comfort
- Avoid prolonged bed rest
- Gentle walking is encouraged

Pain relief

- Paracetamol may help manage pain

- Anti-inflammatory medication may be advised if suitable

Physiotherapy

- Education and reassurance
- Exercises to improve movement, strength, and flexibility
- Advice on posture and lifting techniques

Heat or ice

- Ice may help during acute flare-ups
- Heat can reduce muscle tension
- Use for 10–15 minutes at a time

Injections or surgery

- Rarely needed
- Considered only if pain is severe, persistent, or associated with significant nerve problems

Exercises

Gentle spinal exercises help recovery and prevent stiffness. A physiotherapist can advise which exercises are right for you.

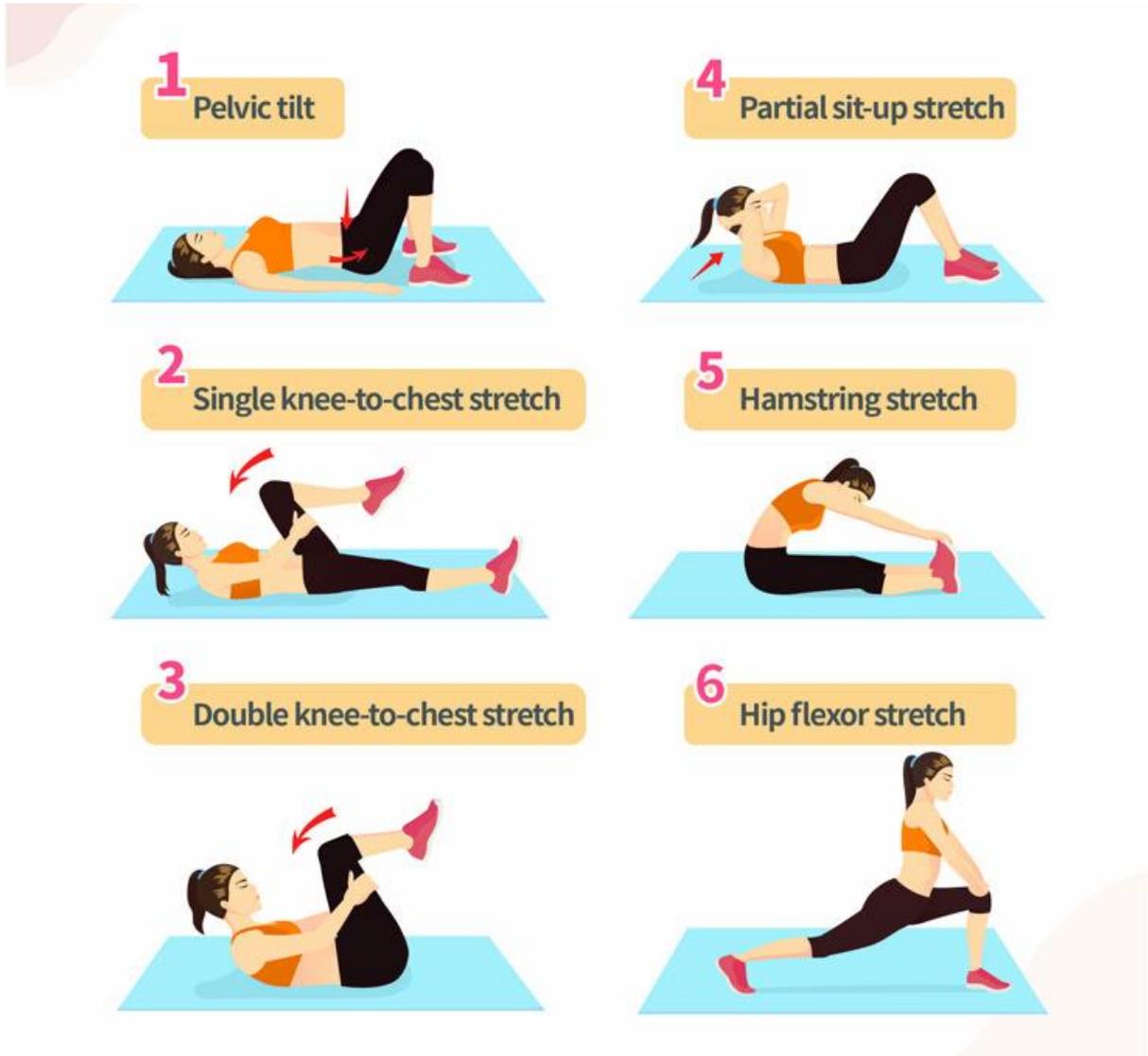
What can I do to help recovery?

- Stay active and avoid fear-based avoidance of movement
- Use good posture when sitting and lifting
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Stop smoking, if applicable

When should I seek urgent medical advice?

Seek **urgent medical help** if you develop:

- Loss of bladder or bowel control
- Numbness around the genitals or anus (saddle numbness)
- Progressive weakness in the legs or arms
- Severe pain following a major injury



Outlook

Most people improve within weeks to months. Staying active, following advice, and maintaining confidence in movement lead to the best outcomes.
