



# Next Step Newsletter

Next Step  
Physical Therapy  
(516) 681- 8070

March, 2008

*Giving you information and answers to any physical therapy, health or fitness related questions*

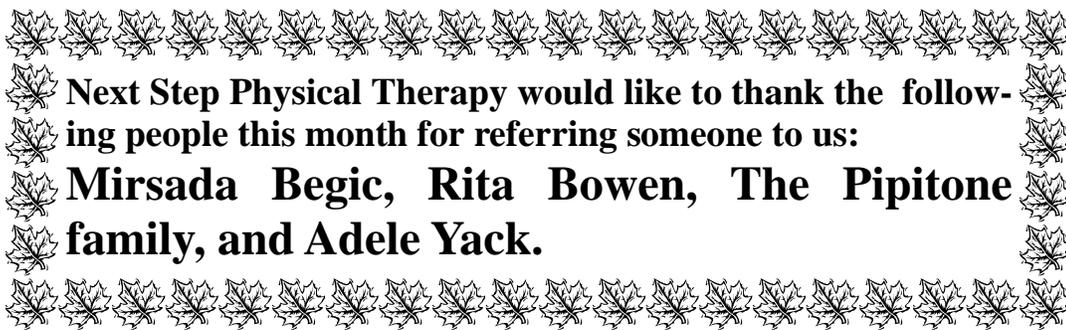
## Understanding inter-vertebral discs?

Inter-vertebral discs are very important structures in the human spine. They are located between each segment of the spine and they act to provide support and shock absorption to your body. They primarily resist compression forces, most notably gravity, but they also help lessen the force of impact during each step you take. Although discs are very helpful, even essential, to have a healthy spine, sometimes they can become a major problem. Over time, or under extremely high forces, a disc can "bulge" or even herniate. What does that exactly mean?

Let's think of a disc as a jelly donut. If you apply a little pressure onto that donut you will see the sides start to expand as you push down. Continue pushing down and you'll see a buildup of the jelly start pushing out towards the sides. That's a "bulge". Now take that jelly donut and keep pushing down....SPLAT! Now you have jelly seeping out of the "bulge" in the donut and spilling out onto the kitchen table. That's a herniated disc.

A "bulging" disc can resume it's normal shape and return to normal function if the pressure is released. A herniated disc is unable to fix itself because the disc has been ruptured and the inside material (nucleus pulposus) is outside of the disc confines. That "jelly" that is now sitting outside of the disc can cause serious pain and disability if it happens to contact the nerves of the spine that are in very close proximity. Pain can be in the back or can be into the legs or arms, if the nerve becomes irritated.

Physical therapy can help both "bulging" and herniated discs. In some cases, herniated discs may require surgery to remove the disc content that is pressing on the nerves or the spinal cord. Unless there are serious neurologic signs related to the herniated disc, you should always try physical therapy first before considering surgery.



**Next Step Physical Therapy would like to thank the following people this month for referring someone to us:**

**Mirsada Begic, Rita Bowen, The Pipitone family, and Adele Yack.**

P.L asks "If a herniated disc is a permanent problem, then how can therapy help?"

Great question! As discussed above, a herniated disc can not go back to normal - it is a permanent injury. However, that does not mean that you have to have pain. When you have a herniated disc, the whole area can become inflamed, which makes matters worse because inflammation causes swelling and increases pressure on the surrounding nerves. Through corrective exercise and behavior/postural modifications you can decrease the pressure to that area, allowing the inflammation to subside and to alleviate pressure to the disc and surrounding nerves. It is important to realize that the disc is permanently herniated, and it is possible to have flair ups or exacerbations from time to time. With that said, there are people that have herniated discs and have only had one episode in their lifetime or who have never had any back pain and upon later examination have discovered that they have multiple herniated discs for many years.

## Updates

**Welcome to the Next Step Newsletter!**

**Win a pair of movie tickets!!**

**The first 2 people to call us with the answer to this question wins a pair of movie tickets.**

**Can a "bulging" disc return back to a normal disco ????**

- If you have a friend or family member that you think could use our help please let us know or have them call us.
- If you would like more information on any of the topics discussed here please give us a call.
- If you have a question that you would like to have answered (maybe in the next newsletter) please don't hesitate to call.
- What topics are you interested in and would like to see in the newsletter? Let us know.

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