





Spinal stenosis is a condition characterized by a narrowing of the spinal canal caused by the thickening of the spinal ligaments, bone spurs, herniated discs or spinal injury. This narrowing exerts pressure on the spinal cord and/or spinal nerve roots, causing pain, numbness and other symptoms.

In lumbar stenosis, the spinal nerve roots in the lower back are compressed, or choked. This can produce symptoms of sciatica - tingling, weakness or numbness that radiates from the low back and into the buttocks and legs, especially with movement and activity.

Research shows that bone spurs can be caused by a liver deficiency and loss of inhibition of bony growth.<sup>1</sup> Bone spur formation with extra calcium deposition in the joint is normally inhibited by the carboxylated matrix Gla protein (MGP). Carboxylated MGP also suppresses bone morphogenetic protein (BMP), a bone growth hormone.

In osteoarthritic joints, chondrocytes in the cartilage tissue resume a hypertrophic phenotype that is unable to carboxylate the MGP. Un-carboxylated MGP cannot prevent calcium deposition, and is unable to suppress BMP and inhibit extra bony growth, causing bone spur formation.

Carboxylation of MGP is a vitamin K-dependent process. Dietary vitamin K is absorbed through the intestines using bile salts produced by the liver. A liver deficiency can cause reduced bile production, resulting in a vitamin K deficiency. With an inadequate supply of vitamin K, the MGP cannot be carboxylated, leading to bone spurs and stenosis.

A TCM Solution

In addition to acupuncture, Chinese herbal patches have shown to be effective in addressing the root cause of back pain by helping heal the bulging and herniated disc, dissolve the bony growth, and resolve stenosis. Clinical application of Chinese herbal patches that consist of myrrh, Himalayan teasel root, twotooth achranthes root and 12 other Chinese herbs can speed up the healing of disc injuries and resolve back pain.

The herbal patch helps to increase localized blood flow to enhance nutrient supply.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, it enhances local lymphatic circulation, therefore decreasing nearby inflammation caused by inflammatory chemical mediators; and removes excess lactic acid in the area that could be damaging the disc's nutritional supply.<sup>3</sup>

The herbs also increase the localized temperature, which speeds up the biosynthesis of new tissues to support disc health.<sup>4</sup> In my experience, with the use of the herbal patches for 1-3 months, patients with bulging and herniated discs can get complete pain elimination.

Herbal ingredients such as clam shell and oyster shell can help to break down the bone spur and any nearby scar tissue that occurs in stenosis.<sup>5-6</sup> The healing of the spinal disc and joint cartilage injury helps the chondrocyte to resume its healthy state to carry out the carboxylation of the matrix Gla protein (MGP) – the key step for the inhibition of a bony growth.

Intake herbal formulas including herbs like *Lycium barbarum* help to improve liver health, addressing the liver dysfunction to improve bile levels and therefore re-establish vitamin K levels to prevent future bone spurs from forming. With the use of the herbal patches and intake formula for three months, patients with bone spurs and stenosis can also have a significant improvement with sustained results.

#### Clinical Case: Successful Resolution of Bulging Discs

- *Alexandra Bouharevich, DC, ON, Canada*

A 52-year-old female presented with pain in her low back with a rating of 10/10. In April, she went in for an MRI and was diagnosed with bulging discs at L5-S1 and L2-L3. The patient tried decompression therapy, physical therapy and chiropractic adjustments, all of which made her pain worse.

She tried taking anti-inflammatories and Percocet, which did nothing to manage her symptoms, but made her physically ill. She could not stand for longer than 60 seconds without needing to lie down, which ultimately led to her taking a break from work.

She talked to her practitioner, Dr. Bouharevich, about overseeing her treatment. In mid-May, the patient started using Chinese herbal patches and internal formula. The first week helped immensely with her pain; the second week, her pain got much worse due to the patches' healing mechanism of regaining sensation in the nerves that were previously not responding from the injury.

However, after one month, she noticed her pain was slowly getting better each day. After completing her second month, she noted a complete resolution of her pain. She continued one extra month for sustained results, was extremely happy with the outcome, and reported she was able to go back to work, exercise regularly and participate in all her daily life activities.

#### *References*

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