

# Evaluation of Spinal Disorders

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Diagnostic tests are used to assess whether there is abnormal function or a disease process. In the case of back pain diagnostic testing is used to identify whether there is a structural/anatomical lesion causing the pain. It is also used to locate and characterize a disease process. Diagnostic tests are useful for pinpointing the source and extent of a lesion (such as a herniated disc), which in turn assists in the diagnosis and development of an appropriate treatment plan.

### Do the Findings Correlate?

One of the biggest challenges in rendering a spinal diagnosis is to determine if the abnormalities seen on diagnostic imaging studies such as MRI or CT have significance. Most of the structural abnormalities seen on these types of imaging procedures are not associated with pain or other symptoms.

The majority of people over 50 years old will present with one or more degenerative discs. It therefore becomes critical that your attending physician or physicians correlate your history, physical examination findings, imaging findings, and other test results in an attempt to determine whether findings correlate.

The primary goal of a diagnostic workup is to determine the cause of the problem, which needs to be treated.