

Spondylolysis “Pars defect” (lumbar)

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Spondylolysis is a defect that occurs in the posterior part of the spine known as the pars intrarticularis. There are many causes of spondylolysis. Spondylolysis usually occurs in young athletes. This disorder is essentially a stress fracture of part of the spine. When occurring at younger ages, it is often a source of lower back pain. Interestingly, this defect will also show up in adults with back pain and no prior history of injury or sports participation. Some adults are found to have a spondylolysis who have no symptoms whatsoever.

Spondylolysis is seldom seen in patients under the age of five and is found in five percent of people over the age of seven. Whether there is a hereditary component of the disease is not clear, but an explanation for the increase in instances relative to age could be explained by the increase in activity of children, as they get older. Young children involved in regular sports are more at risk of developing structural disorders including spondylolysis. Spondylolysis is a common cause of back pain in children, and the most likely cause of pain in patients under age 26, but rarely the only cause of complaints after age 40.

Spondylolysis becomes a problem if it is painful or associated with instability of the spine. In these situations, it may be associated with lumbar disc degeneration or narrowing of the area where the nerve roots exit the spinal column (the neural foramina). This may be a cause of back and leg pain.

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