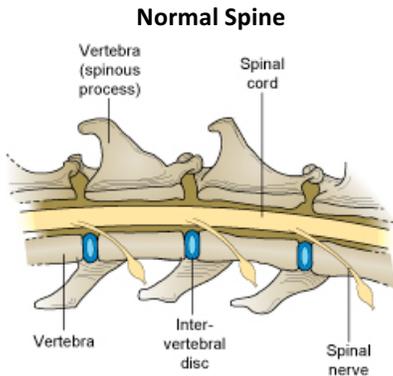


# Disc Disease

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## CASE:

Max, a 9 year old male neutered Dachshund, presented to our hospital for having a painful back, and difficulty walking. On Max's initial exam, he was completely paralyzed in his hindlimbs. He was able to feel some pain when his paws were squeezed, but he didn't appear painful.



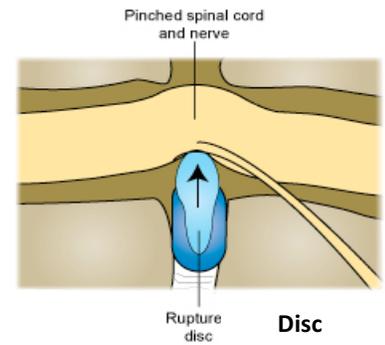
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## DISC DISEASE IN DOGS:

Intervertebral disc disease (IVDD) is a degeneration of the intervertebral discs that causes a protrusion or extrusion of disc material into the spinal canal. This disc material causes compression of the spinal cord and/or nerve root entrapment. IVDD commonly occurs in dogs between the ages of 3 to 8 years. Certain breeds are predisposed to it such as Dachshunds, Beagles, Cocker spaniels, and Shih-Tzu's. Some larger breeds such as Labrador retrievers, Doberman pinschers, and Dalmatians are also genetically predisposed.

Clinical signs you may notice are reluctance to jump, climb, or engage in any forms of physical activity. Cervical (neck) disc disease is suspected if they have neck pain, carry the head low, are reluctant to move their head around, and show signs of tetraparesis (weakness in all four legs). With thoracolumbar (back) disc disease, they will often present with an arched back, cry when picked up, be reluctant to walk, and have paraparesis (weakness in the hind legs).

If your pet is showing any of these signs, we will first do an orthopedic examination to rule out musculoskeletal disease. Next, a neurologic exam will be done to help localize the lesion. However, this does not confirm that disc disease is the cause. Blood work, urinalysis, and radiographs would be performed as the initial tests. Advanced testing to help confirm the diagnosis would be myelography, CT, or MRI.



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Treatment of the disc disease is based on the severity and progression of discomfort and neurologic dysfunction. Anti-inflammatory medications such as steroids or non-steroidals (NSAIDs) are used. Muscle relaxants and pain medications such as opiates are also used. Patients with more severe neurologic signs (loss of motor function or paralysis) should have surgery if at all possible. Patients with recurrent signs, spinal pain that can't be controlled, or worsening neurologic signs are also surgical candidates.

## OUTCOME

Max was kept on steroids. Due to the expense of surgery, the owner was unable to afford it. Since Max was not painful, his owners elected to get a canine cart (wheelchair). Measurements were taken on Max and he was fit for a cart. He was adorable and walked great with the cart. Once he started using the cart, he was able to get around and started to regain strength of his hind limbs. We are happy to

report that amazingly, he is able to walk again without the help of the cart!

