

**Ask the Expert**

*Arizona Republic*

**Q: I have a herniated disk and I recently heard about a new type of physical therapy called the McKenzie Method that shows you how to treat your own back when it goes out. Is this something I should consider?**

**A:** Yes. The McKenzie Method will allow you to correct a herniated disc on your own and is very different from traditional physical therapy. The McKenzie Method was originally developed by Robin McKenzie, a physical therapist in New Zealand, and recently became available in the United States.

This method is a spine-specific form of physical therapy that is used for patients with back or leg pain due to herniated discs. Traditional physical therapy involves strengthening the core muscles, which is good for the prevention of back pain, but not for treatment of back pain as this typically causes the discs to herniate backward and compress the sciatic nerve roots. The McKenzie Method teaches patients maneuvers that allow the herniated disc to return to its normal position. Being able to prevent and control your back pain helps to avoid surgery, lengthy visits to the emergency room, or having to wait for an appointment with your healthcare provider.

In order to begin treatment, you need to find a physical therapist with specialized training and certification in the McKenzie Method. During your first visit, you will undergo a detailed evaluation to see if physical therapy will help alleviate your pain. Once it has been determined what kind of syndrome you suffer from, a personalized treatment plan will be created. For insurance coverage purposes, the McKenzie Method won't cost more, and it is listed in the same manner as traditional physical therapy. Pain is typically under control within six visits or less.

The main goal behind the McKenzie Method is to centralize pain closer to the spine, where it is easier to manage, and put an end to it. Patients who see a physical therapist that use the McKenzie Method will be taught the specific stretches or exercises so he or she can self-treat and play an active role in their recovery from back pain. This method may be an alternative to medication therapy for some people, allowing them to take a proactive approach to their back pain and managing their symptoms if they reoccur.



Catholic Healthcare West



*Wladislaw Fedoriw, M.D., is board certified in Pain Medicine, as well as in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. He currently practices at Catholic Healthcare West's (CHW) Chandler Regional Medical Center, Mercy Gilbert Medical Center, and St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center. To learn more about CHW's inpatient and outpatient Rehabilitation Services, or to make an appointment, please call the ResourceLink at 1.877.728.5414.*