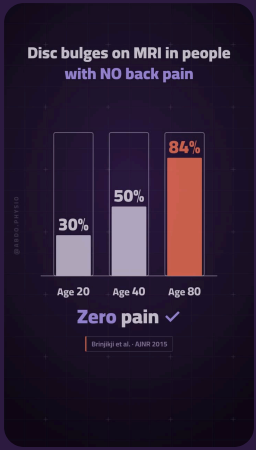
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FREE GUIDE

Disc bulge on your MRI? Next steps

Your back MRI says "disc bulge". Read the scan in the right light, then keep moving.



1 Read your report calmly

- Disc bulges are **very common in people with no back pain**: about 30% at age 20, 50% at 40, 84% at 80.
- Often they're **part of normal ageing**, like grey hair.
- A scan only means something when it **matches your symptoms and a physical exam**.
- Ask your physiotherapist or doctor: **"Does this match my symptoms and your exam?"**

2 Build-up walking plan

MOST DAYS **GOAL: 30 MIN, 5× A WEEK**

1. Start with a walk that feels **comfortable today**, even 5 to 10 minutes.
2. Easy pace, arms swinging. Mild aching that settles within a day is usually OK.
3. Each week, add **a few minutes** or one more walk if last week felt fine.
4. **Sharp or worsening pain?** Scale back. Bad day? A shorter walk beats none.

⚠ Get help now if...

- **numbness** around your bottom, private parts or inner thighs (emergency)
- new **trouble peeing**, or losing bladder or bowel control (emergency)
- weakness or numbness in **both legs**, or weakness getting worse (same day)
- **fever**, past **cancer** or unexplained **weight loss**
- **constant pain** that no position or rest eases
- pain after a **fall**, or with **osteoporosis** or long-term steroids



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Educational content only. Not a substitute for an in-person assessment by a physiotherapist or doctor. Stop any exercise that causes sharp or worsening pain. Disc bulges in people without back pain: Brinjikji et al., AJNR, 2015. Walking and recurrence: Pocovi et al., Lancet, 2024.