

Eli's Rehab Report

READER QUESTIONS: Look for Desiccation of Disk, L5-S1, Dx No More

Question: I'm looking for an [ICD-9 code](#) for "Desiccation of disk, L5-S1." Is there a code for this?

Nebraska Subscriber

Answer: You should use [722.52](#) (Lumbar or lumbosacral intervertebral disk degeneration). The medical term "desiccation" means "drying out." A desiccated disk is one with reduced water content in the nucleus pulposus of the intervertebral disk.

All disks degenerate as we age. Disks are basically shock absorbers that hold a lot of water. Each disk begins to lose its water and its shock absorber effect starting in the late teens.

Disk degeneration is not necessarily a problem and is frequently a normal process of aging. Only when a degenerated disk causes pain does it become a problem. Degeneration of the vertebral joint structures commonly begins with disk desiccation.