

Many cells in the human body release enzymes, such as MMPs, into the spaces between cells. MMPs maintain and repair parts of the body by breaking down collagen or other structural compounds.

Several health problems have been linked to MMP activity in humans. One example is a herniated (ruptured) disc. There are cartilaginous discs between each of the vertebrae of the spine. If the concentration of MMPs released into a disc becomes too high, then the MMPs begin to break apart the structural compounds of the disc. As a result, the disc becomes weak and ruptures.

The diagram below shows a herniated disc in the human spine. Material from inside the disc has spread out from between the vertebrae and is applying pressure to the nerves and surrounding tissues.

