

Back Pain and Cauda Equina Warning Signs

All Departments

Patient Information Leaflet

Common back pain and what to expect

Many patients have a combination of back pain, leg pain, leg numbness and leg weakness. These symptoms can be very distressing for you, but don't necessarily require emergency medical attention. Often, it is necessary to seek early advice by a physiotherapist or your GP for an assessment.

What is cauda equina syndrome? (CES)

Cauda equina syndrome (CES) is an uncommon but serious neurological condition affecting the cauda equina, a group of nerves at the lowest point of your back that control your legs, bladder and bowel function and supply sensation to the skin around the bottom, back passage, genitals and inner thigh.

CES occurs when this group of nerves are compressed. The most common cause of compression is when a disc in the lower back occupies the same space as the nerves.

Any delay in the diagnosis of cauda equina syndrome can impact recovery and could lead to permanent damage, such as bladder and bowel incontinence or paralysis of the legs.

This leaflet has been developed to increase awareness of this condition, including the signs and symptoms.

Cauda equina warning signs

Any of the warning signs below, or a combination, could be symptoms of cauda equina syndrome.

If you are experiencing any of these warning signs, please seek help immediately by going to your local Emergency Department. Take this leaflet with you to help explain your symptoms.

- A recent onset of significant pain and/or a feeling of pins and needles/numbness in **both legs**.
- Loss of feeling/pins and needles between your inner thighs or genitals.
- Numbness in or around your back passage or buttocks.
- An altered feeling when using toilet paper to wipe yourself.
- Increasing difficulty when you try to urinate.
- Increasing difficulty when you try to stop or control your flow of urine.
- Loss of sensation when you pass urine.
- Leaking of urine or recent use of pads.
- Not knowing when your bladder is either empty or full.
- Inability to stop a bowel motion or leaking.
- Loss of sensation when you pass a bowel motion.
- Change in ability to achieve an erection or ejaculate.
- Loss of sensation in genitals during sexual intercourse.

Where can I find out more?

The following websites have further information regarding cauda equina syndrome:

https://www.physio-pedia.com/Cauda_Equina_Syndrome

<https://caudaequinuk.org.uk/>

<https://www.ihavecaudaequina.com/>

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact the department who issued you the leaflet.

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dgft.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/physiotherapy-community/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email dgft.patient.information@nhs.net

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

للحصول على هذه النشرة بحجم أكبر، وعلى شكل إصدار صوتي و بلغات أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال بالرقم 08000730510.

此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

ਇਹ ਪਰਚਾ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ, ਬੋਲ ਕੇ ਰੀਕਾਰਡ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਅਤੇ ਦੂਸਰੀਆਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੋ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ, 0800 073 0510 ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜੀ।

Aceasta broșura poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru vă rugăm să sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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