

# Integrated Spinal Service

A guide for patients

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## Spinal pain (and leg/arm pain)

Pain in the back or neck is very common. It affects nearly everyone at some point in their life. Often it lasts only a few days or weeks. This pain is rarely due to any serious disease or damage. Most people are able to manage themselves with the right advice and information (see below "How to get advice and help").

## I have back or neck (and leg/arm) pain. What should I do?

1. take action – keeping moving usually helps
2. get advice (*see below*)
3. take pain relief.

## What is the NHS Lothian Integrated Spinal Service?

A small number of people with back or neck pain (and leg/arm pain) need further help. In NHS Lothian all the services which help people with back or neck pain (and leg/arm pain) work together to ensure that they provide **the right service, for the right person, at the right time, in the right place**. This is the NHS Lothian Integrated Spinal Service.

## I have been referred to the Integrated Spinal Service, what happens now?

- We will contact you by letter (or sometimes by phone)
- You will be offered an appointment
- Where possible we will offer a choice of clinic locations
- You will be assessed by the clinician best placed to help you, based on the information that has been provided.

Most people will see a **Physiotherapist**. They work with you to help you with your symptoms.

A few people will see one of our **Advanced Physiotherapy Practitioners**. They are specialists who can arrange investigations and work closely with spinal surgeons. Very few people with back or neck pain (less than 2%) need an operation.

Some people also need the opinion of pain services or a Rheumatologist. You will be referred to the most appropriate service depending upon your needs.

## What happens at your first appointment?

Your symptoms will be assessed at your first appointment. This may be a telephone or face to face appointment. A number of questions are asked and you may be asked to partially undress so that your back or neck (and legs/arms) can be examined.

Back or neck problems rarely need investigations. The Advanced Physiotherapy Practitioners can arrange investigations, such as scans, if they are needed. The findings of the assessment will be discussed with you. Your treatment and management options will then be decided jointly with you.

## Before your appointment

- Keep a list of your current medication and tablets that you are taking to hand.
- You may wish to make a list of any questions and concerns that you have.
- **If your appointment is over the phone**
  - If you have recently changed your telephone number, please make sure to contact us by calling 0131 536 1060 – option 7.
  - At your appointment time, please ensure you are in a private, quiet space. We may phone you from a withheld number.
- **If your appointment is at an NHS premises**
  - Plan your travel and please arrive before your appointment time.
  - Bring suitable clothing for a physical assessment. Both your back and neck and your legs/arms may need to be examined so please allow for this.

## Keeping your Appointment

If you cannot keep your appointment, or have been given one that is unsuitable, please change it by phoning the number on your appointment letter. Please provide as much notice as possible so that we can give the appointment to someone else. This helps us keep our waiting times to a minimum.

## How to get advice and help

Reliable, trustworthy advice and information about spinal pain from:

[www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/muscle-bone-and-joints](http://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/muscle-bone-and-joints)



Integrated Spinal Service website:

<https://services.nhsllothian.scot/integratedspinalservice/>

