

Spinal Surgery - Decompression of lumbar spine

Introduction

The Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on the NHS ability to provide routine elective services. We recognise that patients are waiting longer than we would all like and it is not always possible to identify when treatment will take place. This document provides you with information on how you can support yourself while waiting to attend the hospital.

Guidance for Patients

Lumbar decompression surgery is a type of surgery used to treat compressed nerves in the lower (lumbar) spine.

It's only recommended when non-surgical treatments haven't helped.

The surgery aims to improve symptoms such as persistent pain and numbness in the legs caused by pressure on the nerves in the spine.

Lumbar decompression surgery is often used to treat:

- spinal stenosis – narrowing of a section of the spinal column, which puts pressure on the nerves inside
- a slipped disc and sciatica – where a damaged spinal disc presses down on an underlying nerve
- spinal injuries – such as a fracture or the swelling of tissue
- metastatic spinal cord compression – where cancer in one part of the body, such as the lungs, spreads into the spine and presses on the spinal cord or nerves

Lumbar decompression surgery is usually only considered if non-surgical treatments for your lower spine haven't worked and symptoms are affecting your quality of life.

Non-surgical treatments include painkillers, physiotherapy and spinal injection therapy. Spinal injection therapy is a course of spinal injections that can be used in combination with other therapies, such as physiotherapy. Local anaesthetic and steroids are injected to help reduce swelling and inflammation.

Lumbar decompression surgery may also be considered if you experience serious side effects when taking medications that affect your ability to work.

Surgery will only be recommended if you're healthy enough to withstand the effects of the anaesthetic and the surgery.

To help you recover from your operation and reduce your risk of complications, it helps if you're as fit as possible before surgery.

As soon as you know you're going to have lumbar decompression surgery, it's advisable to stop smoking (if you smoke), eat a healthy, balanced diet and take regular exercise.

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What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

Urgent Health Advice

For urgent health advice about physical or mental health, when it's not an emergency, please call 111 from any landline or mobile phone. You can also visit www.nhs.uk. The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Life Threatening Emergencies

For something life threatening – severe bleeding, breathing difficulties or chest pains – please dial 999.

GP surgeries are still open

GP practice staff are also helping patients to manage their conditions at home while they wait for hospital appointments.

GP surgeries are still open and are working differently to how they did before the COVID-19 pandemic and GP practices continue to make best use of telephone, online and video consultations. Face-to-face appointments are still being given to those who need it.

When you phone or use an online form to contact your GP surgery to make an appointment, you will be asked some questions which are designed to help staff guide you to the most appropriate clinical person to help you with your condition. This could be a nurse, clinical pharmacist, physician's associate, GP or paramedic.

Contact Us

In some areas, we are experiencing a significant backlog following our response to the Covid-19 pandemic. We are doing everything we can to reduce this backlog including putting on extra clinics and theatre lists and opening additional sites to offer these services. We have also increased the ways we can offer appointments including offering more video and telephone appointments (as well as face to face appointments where appropriate).

Please can we request that you **do not contact your GP practice about waiting times**, as they do not have access to this information.

If you have any concerns or questions please use the contact details on your hospital letter, or if you do not have a letter with these contact details please contact our [Patient Advice & Liaison teams](#).

Keep Moving

Reducing your weight and getting active are two of the most powerful things you can do for your body and for your mind. Extra weight places additional strain on your lungs and heart, making it harder for the body to cope with surgery and respond to diseases, including COVID-19

Eating a healthy diet will help you get fit and recover quicker after surgery. Being a healthy weight also reduces your risk of blood clots and wound infections afterwards.

[Visit our weight management page for details of local support available.](#)

Improve Your Health

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected everyone which has caused a lot of people to think more seriously about their health. If you have decided this is the right time for you to make changes check out

www.nhs.uk/live-well and www.nhs.uk/oneyou/

They can also provide some inspiration for you and your family. The Trust has access to many resources which may help you in making healthier choices, these can be accessed [here](#).

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Good Mental Health

Mental health issues will affect 1 in 4 people at some point in their life. Although FHFT does not itself provide urgent mental health specialist services, we are keen that you can access help and support when you need it. Please visit [FHFT website](#) where you can access links to Mental Health support in the local area.

Ongoing health conditions

About 15 million people in England have an ongoing health condition.

Long-term conditions or chronic diseases are conditions for which there is currently no cure, and which are managed with drugs and other treatment, for example: diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, arthritis and hypertension (high blood pressure).

If you are living with one of these ongoing health conditions, there are many ways in which you can [look after yourself](#).