



# Spinal surgery – Decompression of lumbar spine





## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the ability to provide routine elective services within the NHS. We recognise that patients are waiting longer than we would like and it is not always possible to identify when treatment will take place.

Our waiting lists have been clinically reviewed to ensure patients are seen in priority order and we continue to monitor these lists. This may mean you wait longer for your care, but we will be in touch as soon as possible with details of your appointment.

This document provides you with information on how you can support yourself while waiting to attend the hospital. The guidance has been written by clinicians who are responsible for your care.

A spinal decompression is an operation carried out on patients with pressure on the spine or the associated nerves. A narrowing of the space available for the nerves in the spine is caused by age related changes in your lower back. The spinal canal can become so tight (stenotic) that the nerves become compressed. This nerve compression can cause pain and other symptoms in your legs. The aim of a spinal decompression is to make more space for the nerves in your lower back to prevent your symptoms from getting any worse. Following surgery, most patients get good relief of their leg pain. A spinal decompression is not generally an operation for back pain.

## Guidance for patients

It is important that while you are waiting for your surgery you remain as active and as medically fit as possible. If you have any long-standing conditions you should get this reviewed at your doctor's surgery to make sure it remains well controlled. This will also help prevent any unnecessary delays when you come for your pre-operative assessment. Maintaining a well-balanced diet is also important, as is reducing any excessive weight that may be impacting on your general health. If you are a current smoker it would be advisable to seek support to help with stopping, advice can be found at your local pharmacy or doctor's surgery.

Further links which may help you manage your condition whilst you await treatment can be found below:

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/>
- <https://www.patientaccess.com/> (Connect to your GP services online)
- <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/>



## What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

### Red Flag Symptoms to look out for

If you experience the following whilst waiting for your treatment, please seek urgent advice.

- Any new onset bladder or bowel disturbance

### 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](http://www.nhs.uk). The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

### Life threatening emergencies

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

### GP surgeries are still open

If you experience an increase in pain, an inability to bear weight on this limb or a significant reduction in mobility, you should in the first instance contact your General Practitioner for review and advice.

GP surgeries are still open and are working differently to how they did before the COVID-19 pandemic. 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

To change or cancel your appointment, please call:

**For Luton & Dunstable University Hospital – 01582 561385**  
Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

**For Bedford Hospital – 01234 355122 ext: 2035**  
Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm.

Alternatively, you can visit our website to request a change to your appointment here:



Luton Site: <https://www.bedfordshirehospitals.nhs.uk/change-cancel-appointment/change-cancel-appointment-luton-and-dunstable-university-hospital/>

Bedford site: [Change / Cancel Your Appointment | Bedford Hospital \(bedfordshirehospitals.nhs.uk\)](https://www.bedfordshirehospitals.nhs.uk/change-cancel-appointment/change-cancel-appointment-bedford-hospital/)

To change or cancel your surgery admission date, please telephone the contact number on your admission letter between 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

For any other queries, please call or email your consultant's secretary. Their contact details will be on the most recent letter from your consultant.