

Cauda Equina Syndrome

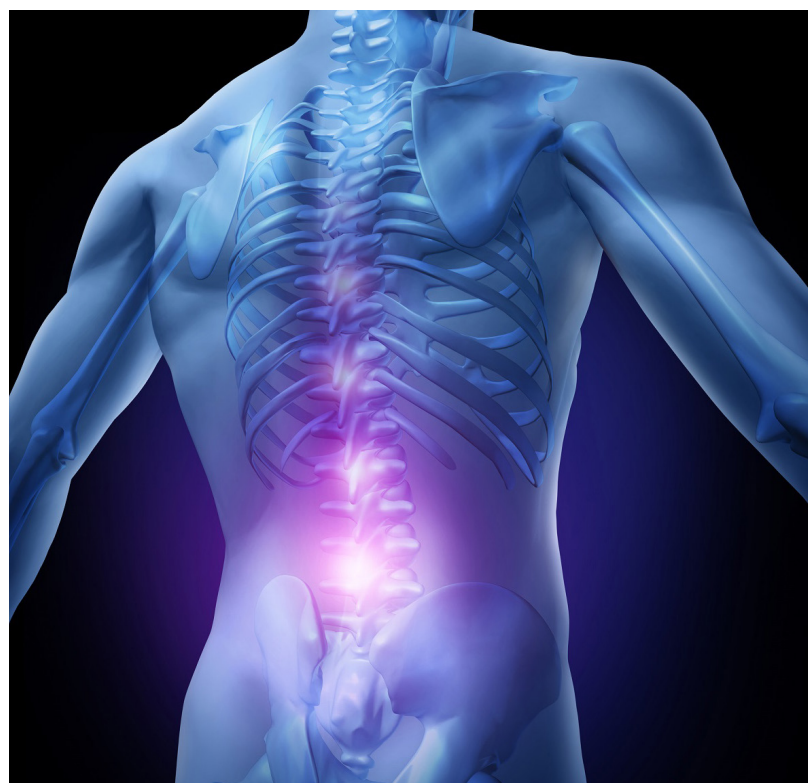
What is happening?

You were given this leaflet by the person who assessed you today. You saw them mainly for your back and/or leg pain, but you also mentioned some other symptoms. You may have told them about recent changes to your toileting or sexual function, or numbness of your bottom or genitals. You have been asked to go to your local hospital straight away. This is because these details, along with the assessment they did today, make us think you need an urgent MRI scan.

The MRI scan is needed to give us further information about what may be causing your problems.

We are concerned you might have something called Cauda Equina Syndrome. This is a condition caused by pressure on the nerves that supply your bladder, bowel, sexual function, and the feeling around your bottom and genitals. Cauda equina syndrome is very rare. When we look at the MRI scans of 100 people that we think might have this condition, 90-95 of them do not.

But, for the 5-10 in 100 that do have cauda equina syndrome, it can be life changing and needs emergency treatment. This is why it is important you have an MRI scan today, and we do that through the Accident and Emergency Department.



Spinal Surgery Service
Advice for patients

J Gill/Jul21/review Jul24
www.somersetft.nhs.uk



We feel it is very important to assess you further today
Go straight to the Accident and Emergency Department (A&E)
DO NOT DELAY
Your MRI scan is already being arranged as an emergency

What now?

Go to the Emergency Department

- ▶ Please go to Musgrove Park Accident and Emergency Department straight away
- ▶ Your referral has been emailed to the Accident and Emergency Department
- ▶ Please tell the triage team the person who sent you has spoken to the Accident and Emergency team about an emergency MRI scan



MRI

- ▶ You will have your MRI scan today
- ▶ After this, a doctor (Radiologist) will look at your MRI scan to see if it shows Cauda Equina Syndrome



Results

- ▶ You will be told the result of your MRI scan in the Accident and Emergency Department today



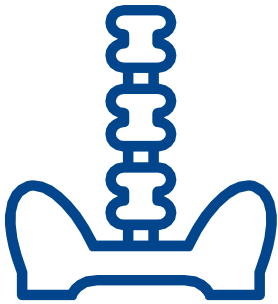
Outcome

There are two possible outcomes:

- ▶ 1. The MRI scan shows you do not have Cauda Equina Syndrome
- ▶ 2. The MRI scan shows you do have Cauda Equina Syndrome

There will be two possible outcomes:

1. You do not have Cauda Equina Syndrome on the MRI



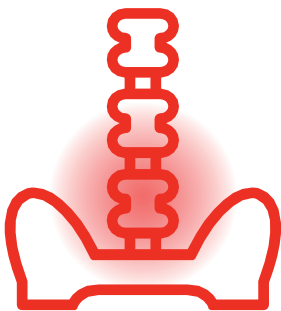
90-95 people in 100 do not have Cauda Equina Syndrome

- ▶ If this is the case, you do not need emergency treatment and it is therefore safe for you to go home from the Accident and Emergency Department today.
- ▶ If needed, the Accident and Emergency team will make sure you have some pain relief to take home today. However, there is no further treatment they can organise for your back and/or leg pain today.

- **Most back and leg pain will improve without the need for any further treatment.**
- **You should continue to see the person who referred you in, or someone at your GP surgery, who will work with you in planning the next steps of your treatment.**

- ▶ It will be difficult for anyone seeing you today to answer questions like 'When will my pain get better?' or 'When will I get an appointment?', as the answers will be different for different people. The Accident and Emergency Departments role today is to assess you for cauda equina syndrome, and the other questions may need answering at a later date.
- ▶ Sometimes the MRI scan can show us something that may explain why you are in pain.
- ▶ If this is urgent, you may be referred to the Spinal team – this could be today or a future appointment as an outpatient. If it is not urgent the person who referred you, or your GP, can use the information from your MRI scan when they talk with you about your treatment options.
- ▶ It is important for you to contact your GP, please do this in the next 48 hours. They may want to look into other causes for your recent change in toileting or sexual function, or the numbness of your bottom or genitals. However, we hope it is reassuring to you, and your GP, that the MRI has shown that this is not due to pressure on the nerves in your back.

2. You do have Cauda Equina Syndrome on the MRI



Only 5-10 people in 100 have Cauda Equina Syndrome

- ▶ You will be seen today by an Orthopaedic Spinal Surgeon.
- ▶ Treatment may involve an operation on your back. But each person is different, and the surgeon will talk to you about your options.