

Cauda Equina Syndrome

Many patients have a combination of back, leg pain, leg numbness and weakness. Whilst these symptoms can be distressing for patients, they do not usually require emergency medical attention.

A rare but serious condition, called Cauda Equina Syndrome, can lead to permanent nerve damage and disability affecting bladder, bowel and sexual function as well as ability to walk. This is usually caused by a sudden onset of severe nerve compression in the lower back, typically caused by a large disc prolapse. A patient with Cauda Equina Syndrome requires emergency surgery to minimise the risk of permanent problems. As such, should you develop any of the following warning signs of Cauda Equina Syndrome you should seek urgent medical attention.

Cauda Equina Syndrome Warning Signs

- Loss of feeling/pins and needles between your inner thighs or genitals
- Numbness in or around your back passage or buttocks
- 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 urine or recent need to use pads
- Not knowing when your bladder is either full or empty
- Inability to stop a bowel movement 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

****ANY COMBINATION – SEEK HELP IMMEDIATELY ****

More information can be found in the booklets section of the patient's area on the British Association of Spine Surgeons website (www.spinesurgeons.ac.uk)