

# Integrated Low Back Pain Service

A guide for patients

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## Low back pain (and leg pain)

Low back pain is very common. It affects nearly everyone at some point in their life. Often it lasts only a few days or weeks. Back 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 (and leg) pain. What do I do?

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

### What is the NHS Lothian Integrated Low Back Pain Service?

A small number of people with back pain (and leg pain) need further help. In NHS Lothian all the services which help people with low back (and leg 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 Low Back Pain Service.

### I have been referred for my back (and leg) pain. What happens now?

- We will contact you by letter (or sometimes by phone)
- You will be offered the soonest appointment in your area
- Where possible we will offer a choice of clinic locations
- You will be seen by the clinician best placed to help you, based on the information you have provided about your problem.

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

A few people will see one of our **advanced physiotherapy practitioners**. They are specialists who can arrange investigations and work closely with spinal surgeons (Neurosurgery and Orthopaedics). Very few people with low back 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 back problem will be assessed at your first appointment. A number of questions are asked and you may be asked to partially undress so that your back (and legs) can be examined.

Low back 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

- Plan how you will travel to the clinic.
- If driving, check the parking facilities before you travel.
- Arrive before your appointment time.
- Allow enough time if using public transport.
- Bring a list of your current medication and tablets that you are taking.
- Bring suitable clothing for a physical assessment. Both your back and your legs may need to be examined. You may wish to wear shorts/ a crop top/ loose fitting trousers.
- You may wish to make a list of any questions and concerns that you have.

## 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 low back pain from:**

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/muscle-bone-and-joints>

**“NHS 24 MSK Help” App:**

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/tools-and-apps/nhs-24-msk-help-app>

① **You can phone 0800 917 9390** (Calls are free from landlines and mobiles). You will be asked a number of safety questions. They will direct you to advice on the internet that can help you manage your back. You may be referred to physiotherapy from this phone line. Physiotherapists are able to link with all the other parts of the Integrated Low Back Pain Service as needed.

**Or you can see your Doctor.** If required your doctor can refer you to the Integrated Low Back Pain Service for further help. This is done by referring you to physiotherapy.