

NON-SURGICAL TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR SPINE PAIN

Surgery for spine pain should only be considered if your symptoms are severe and other treatment options have not provided sufficient relief. While there is a lack of scientific evidence that one treatment is more beneficial than another for spine pain, many patients do gain benefit from other types of treatment. These are worth considering if surgery is not recommended for your condition OR if you wish to trial other treatments before considering proceeding to surgery.

PHYSIOTHERAPY



The goals of physiotherapy are to reduce pain, restore movement and function together with improving mobility and strength. Physiotherapists are highly skilled, evidence-based practitioners who will develop an individualised treatment plan according to your condition and goals and work closely with you to monitor your progress.

A referral is not required to make an appointment. The cost may be partly rebatable through private health or Medicare under certain circumstances. Please speak to our staff if you require a recommendation.

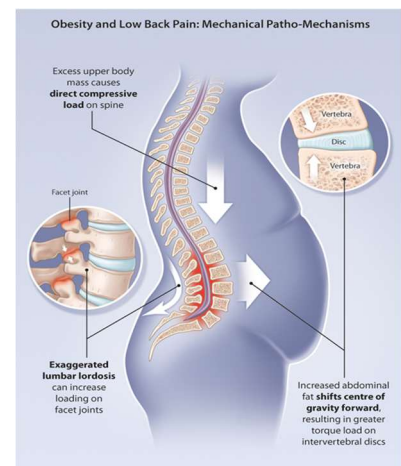
WEIGHT LOSS

A high body mass index (BMI) causes excessive strain on the spine leading to pain, restricted mobility and loss of strength.

Reducing body weight is one of the most important steps in reducing back pain.

Weight management can be a complex issue and may require professional guidance. There are many health professionals who can assist including your GP, dietitian, physiotherapist, exercise physiologist, psychologist, counsellor, exercise groups and support groups.

See our brochure on the Effect of Excess body weight on spine pain or ask our staff for more information.



MOVEMENT

Spine pain can be very debilitating and it is common for people to reduce the activities that can cause pain. However, inactivity causes other problems including stiff joints, muscle weakness, reduced fitness, loss of balance and coordination and may worsen pain or hinder recovery.

Moderate physical activity such as walking, cycling, hydrotherapy and gentle exercise programmes are important in maintaining movement, strength, flexibility and the ability to do activities of daily living. Regular activity can also reduce pain, improve mood and enhance pain coping mechanisms which all contribute to improved quality of life.

PAIN MEDICATION

The aim of pain medication is to provide relief from severe pain, thereby allowing movement and function, and should be used in combination with other strategies such as exercise.

Your GP will be able to prescribe and monitor the appropriate pain relief medication for you. Your GP and pharmacist will also be able to advise how to take the medication to optimise the results.

Some medication needs to be taken regularly while other medication is used only as needed.





COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY

CBT is a form of psychotherapy that helps to manage pain by modifying specific thoughts and behaviours. It has been shown to be effective in alleviating spine pain.

CBT focuses on changing unhelpful thoughts about pain and disability, working towards positive goals, relaxation skills and pain-coping strategies.

There are many online resources available to explain CBT. Your GP, counsellor or psychologist will be able to help you with an individualised approach to CBT and to monitor your progress.

SPINAL INJECTIONS

Spinal injections are performed by radiologists to reduce inflammation and pain.

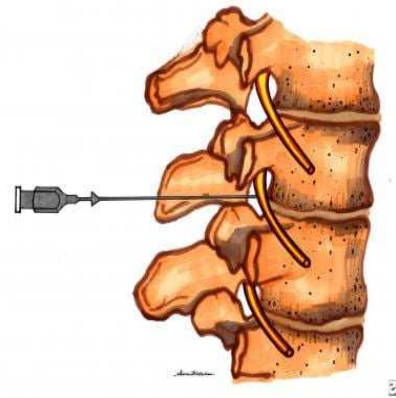
Local anaesthetic and anti-inflammatory / steroid medication is injected in the painful area under CT guidance. The procedure is usually well-tolerated.

Facet joint Injections target the painful joints on either side of the spine.

Epidural injections target the area around the painful nerve roots.

Results vary from no relief to long term relief. Injections may be repeated as necessary.

A referral from your GP to the radiology practice is required. You do not need to see a specialist to obtain this referral.



PAIN MANAGEMENT CLINICS



Pain management clinics utilise the skills of a multi-disciplinary team of professionals including pain management doctors, physiotherapists, psychologists, counsellors and exercise physiologists.

The role of the pain management team is to thoroughly assess all factors contributing to pain and disability and to empower people to effectively manage their pain. This may be achieved through a number of strategies such as education, lifestyle changes, medication and minimally invasive treatments.

A referral is required from your GP or specialist to access this service.

THE ROLE OF YOUR GP

Your GP is the coordinator of your medical care and will develop an appropriate plan with you to manage your pain. A holistic and mindful approach to general health & well being might include: nutrition and weight management, resources about understanding and managing chronic pain, sleep hygiene, mental and social health.

Your GP will be able to :

- *arrange any tests required to help diagnose the source of your pain
- *prescribe and manage pain medications
- *discuss which pain management strategies might be most suitable for you
- *write the necessary referrals to health professionals and discuss whether you may be able to access funding from Medicare for any treatment.



If you require further information or assistance from our staff please call us on (02) 6260 4680.