

## NON-SURGICAL TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR SPINE PAIN

Surgery for spine pain should only be considered if symptoms are severe and other treatment options have not resulted in sufficient relief.

Many patients gain symptomatic benefit from other treatment modalities although it is difficult to predict how much benefit the various treatments will deliver.

Our surgeons would encourage all patients to try other treatments if surgery is not recommended for your condition OR if you wish to try everything before considering proceeding to surgery. The benefits of other treatment modalities may also help you in your recovery from 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.

Some physiotherapists also offer GLA:D(R) BACK programmes that are internationally -recognised programmes with proven effective results in managing back pain.

A referral is not required to make an appointment. The cost of physiotherapy may be partly rebatable through private health or Medicare under certain circumstances.



### 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 speak to our nurse.



### MOVEMENT

Spine pain can be very debilitating and it is common for people to reduce the activities that may cause pain. However, inactivity leads to other problems including stiff joints, muscle weakness, reduced fitness, loss of balance and co-ordination 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 perform 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 and physiotherapy.

Your GP may prescribe and monitor the appropriate pain relief medication for you. Your GP and pharmacist will also be able to advise how to use the medication to optimise the results. Some forms of medication need to be taken regularly while others are used only as needed.

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### 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

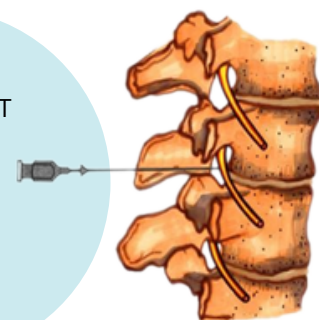
Spinal injections are performed by radiologists to reduce inflammation and pain.

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 to help patients understand and manage chronic pain
- optimising sleep hygiene
- addressing mental and social health.



Your GP will be able to :

- order any tests required to help diagnose the source of your pain
- prescribe and safely manage pain medications
- discuss which pain management strategies might be suitable for you
- provide the necessary referrals to health professionals
- advise whether you are eligible to access funding from Medicare for any treatment.