

CAUDA EQUINA SYNDROME



Back pain and sciatica are common musculoskeletal conditions that have a favourable recovery and can be adequately managed by a healthcare professional.

However, it is also associated with a rare but serious condition called Cauda Equina Syndrome or CES.

Below, you will find the warning signs of Cauda Equina Syndrome which require emergency assessment in A&E.

It is worth noting that most people investigated in A&E for Cauda Equina Syndrome don't have the condition but due to the consequences of it being undiagnosed and not managed appropriately if present, emergency assessment is important.

What are the consequences of Cauda Equina Syndrome?

- Without timely management there could be permanent damage to the nerves controlling the bladder, bowel, sexual organs, and sensation to the genitals, inner thighs, back passage, and buttocks.
- It can also cause permanent damage to the nerves of the legs leading to the inability to walk unaided
- Healthcare professionals please follow the CES interactive pathway gift-interactivepathways.org.uk/cauda-equina-1/

Warning signs

- Numbness or 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/wee
- Increasing difficulty when you try to stop or control your flow of urine/wee
- Loss of sensation when you pass urine/wee
- Leaking urine/ wee or recent need to use pads
- Not knowing when your bladder is either full or empty
- Inability to stop a bowel movement/poo or leaking
- Loss of sensation when you pass a bowel motion/poo
- Change in ability to achieve an erection or ejaculate
- Loss of sensation in genitals/penis or vagina during sexual intercourse

Back pain with or without sciatica and any combination of the above symptoms is important to attend A&E immediately

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