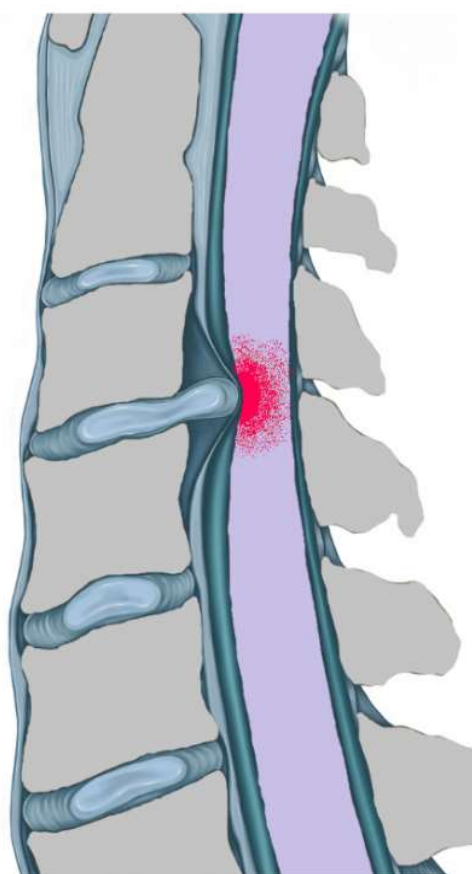


## PATIENT INFORMATION

# Cervical Stenosis

## and Degenerative Cervical Myelopathy



## **A Brief Neck Anatomy**

The normal neck (cervical spine) has 7 bones (vertebrae) and a collection of nerves which branch out in pairs at each level. In between each vertebra there is a disc which acts as a shock absorber and spacer.

The spinal nerves are like electrical wiring, providing signals to areas within the neck, shoulders and arms. These control sensation and movement but can cause pain when they are affected.

The spinal canal is the tunnel between the vertebrae and discs through which your spinal cord travels. The spinal cord is the main nerve pathway which allows signals to travel to and from your brain and the rest of your body.

## **What is Cervical Spine Stenosis?**

Cervical Spine Stenosis is a condition in which your spinal canal starts to narrow. Degenerative changes are the most common cause of cervical spine stenosis.

These changes can include:

- disc bulges,
- osteophytes (bony spurs)
- thickening of surrounding ligaments

These changes are quite common and may not always cause symptoms.

## **Symptoms of Cervical Spine Stenosis**

Symptoms of cervical spine stenosis may include:

- neck pain
- shoulder, arm and hand pain
- altered sensation
- weakness

## **Management of cervical stenosis**

There is no cure, but there are a variety of non-surgical treatments to keep the pain controlled. Most people with spinal stenosis live normal lives.

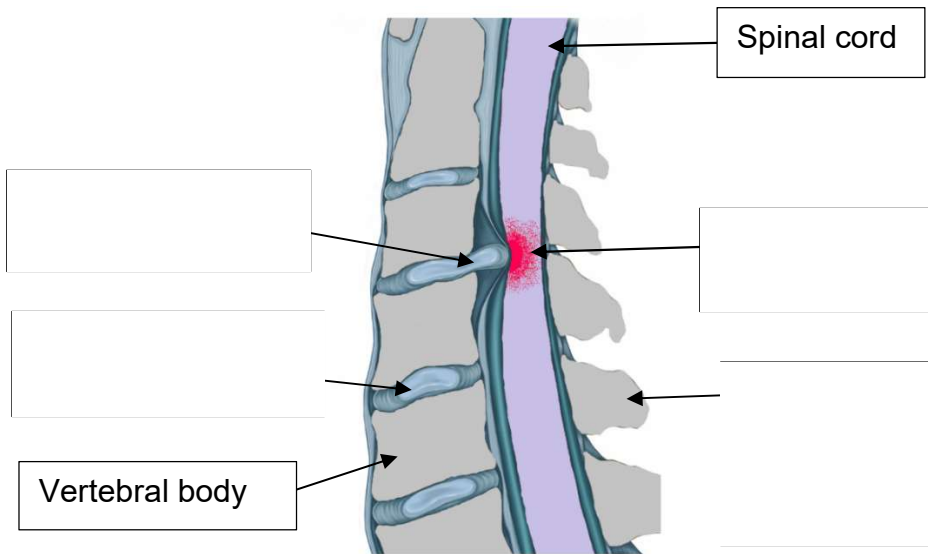
Treatment can include:

- Monitoring of symptoms
- Physiotherapy
- Analgesia (pain medication)
- Pain management services
- Injections

Surgical options may be offered if clinically indicated.

## Cervical myelopathy

In severe cases of stenosis, the narrowing of the central tunnel causes compression to the spinal cord. Significant compression can start to cause damage to the spinal cord. This is referred to as **myelopathy**.



Symptoms of cervical spine myelopathy may include:

- Weakness, or heaviness in the arms, and legs
- Hand clumsiness, such as difficulty doing up buttons
- Changes to your walking pattern such as tripping, stumbling or lack of coordination
- In severe cases, it could affect the normal workings of the bladder and bowels, and altered sensation in the genital region.

## Management of cervical myelopathy

This can include non-operative management, as listed earlier. In severe cases an operation may be discussed with a spinal surgeon. **The aim of surgery is usually to prevent worsening of symptoms.**

## Myelopathy Warning signs

If you notice worsening of your hand function including weakness, clumsiness, loss of control or a change in your walking and balance, then please contact us for a sooner appointment and explain that your symptoms have worsened.

If you develop any changes to the normal workings of your Bladder and Bowels or any onset of numbness or pins and needles within the genital region or around the back passage, this is an **emergency** and you should seek emergency medical attention by attending your local Emergency Department.

## Surgery

Surgery is a possibility for cervical canal stenosis and is normally the standard treatment for degenerative cervical myelopathy. The Myelopathy.org website & The British Association of Spinal Surgeons (BASS) has patient resources and information on different types of surgery.

The most commonly used surgery for cervical spine stenosis and DCM is cervical decompression, including a procedure called Anterior Cervical Decompression and Fusion (ACDF).

Please see [myelopathy.org](http://myelopathy.org) & [www.spinesurgeons.ac.uk](http://www.spinesurgeons.ac.uk) for more details.



## Useful Websites & References

Myelopathy.org website

<https://myelopathy.org/>

BASS Website

[www.spinesurgeons.ac.uk](http://www.spinesurgeons.ac.uk) British Association of Spinal Surgeons website including useful patient information for common spinal treatments

Radiology TSDFT Website

<http://videos.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk/radiology>

Specialist Spinal Orthopaedic Physiotherapy Service TSDFT

[Specialist Spinal Orthopaedic Physiotherapy Service - Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust](#)

Pain Services TSDFT

<https://www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk/services/pain-service/reconnect2life/>

Reconnect2life website with lots of useful patient information and resources

## Contact details

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