

# Understanding metastatic spinal cord compression (MSCC)

Cancer Services

Information for patients

Produced: Jun 2021

Review: Jun 2024

Leaflet number: 635 Version: 3

## Why have I been given this leaflet?

This leaflet about metastatic spinal cord compression (MSCC) has been given to you because you are at risk of developing this condition and you may require immediate attention. Although it is a rare condition, it is an emergency and early diagnosis and treatment can help minimise serious disability and possible paralysis.

## What is metastatic spinal cord compression (MSCC)?

Sometimes when people have cancer it can spread to the spinal column and cause the spinal nerves to be compressed. When the spinal nerves are squeezed it can cause damage to the spinal cord. This is quite rare and unlikely to affect you but it is important to pick it up quickly as the earlier treatments are started, the better the result usually is.

This leaflet is not intended to scare you but to help you recognise the important symptoms to report early so that tests and treatment may be started as soon as possible.

## What do I need to look out for?

**If you experience any of the following symptoms, contact your key worker (usually your nurse specialist) or oncologist (cancer specialist), as soon as possible. If you cannot get hold of either of these, then contact your GP or A&E.**

**Back pain** that may feel like a 'band' around the chest or abdomen, and can sometimes spread over the lower back, into your bottom or legs (you might experience mild back pain, lasting more than one or two weeks and gradually getting worse).

**Severe increasing pain in the spine** that changes when you lie down or stand up, when lifting or straining, wakes you at night or prevents sleep.

---

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit [www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

## What do I need to look out for? (continued)

**Numbness or 'pins and needles'** in toes or fingers, or over the buttocks.

**Feeling unsteady** on your feet, having difficulty with walking, or your legs giving way.

**Problems having a wee (passing urine)**, which may include difficulty controlling your bladder, passing very little urine, or passing none at all.

**Problems controlling your bowels.**

These symptoms can also be caused by a number of other conditions. It is very important to let your doctor know if you have any of these symptoms so that they can be investigated.

## Please seek advice from your doctor or nurse immediately.

Take this booklet and ask them to consider metastatic spinal cord compression as a possible diagnosis and to discuss further management with the **local MSCC co-ordinator**.

Telephone: **07908 178232**

Hours of work: **Monday to Friday 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.**

Out of hours contact the on call Oncology Specialist Registrar via University Hospitals of Leicester Switchboard.

Telephone: **0300 303 1573**

**Or telephone the Emergency Helpline:**

**0808 178 2212**

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔  
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل

જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਸਿ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਲਿ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email [equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)