

# Cauda Equina Syndrome – Important Warning Signs

Low back pain is common and can include a mix of back pain, leg pain, leg numbness and weakness. This can be very difficult but does not necessarily require emergency medical attention.

Cauda Equina Syndrome is a rare **emergency** condition that can happen with low back pain. If not treated as an **emergency** it can lead to permanent damage or disability. The Cauda Equina is a group of nerves that control the bladder, bowel, legs and also supply feeling to the skin around the back passage and genital (sex organ) area.

If you notice **any new onset** or **worsening** of any of the warning signs listed below, since your low back and, or leg pain has started or got worse, you **should go to the nearest Accident and Emergency Department as an emergency** for a medical assessment.

## Loss of feeling and or pins and needles

- Between your back passage and genital (sex organ) area. For example, unable to feel the toilet paper when wiping yourself.

## Changes to your Bladder

- Increasing difficulty when you try to start passing water (urine)
- Increasing difficulty when you try to stop or control your flow of water (urine)
- Loss of feeling (sensation) when you are passing water (urine)
- New leaking of water (urine) or recent need to use pads
- Not knowing when your bladder is either full or empty

## Changes to your Bowel

- Loss of feeling of when you need to have a bowel motion (stool).
- Not being able to tell the difference between having a bowel motion and passing wind
- Not being able to stop a bowel movement (stool) or recent leaking from back passage
- Loss of feeling of when you are having a bowel motion or stool

## Sexual Problems

- Recent change in ability to achieve an erection or ejaculate
- Loss of feeling in genitals (sex organs) during sexual intercourse