

Information for Patients

Spinal fusion surgery (an operation) is where a piece of bone or surgical material is used to connect two individual vertebrae of the back together. Mechanical lower back pain means pain caused by stress and strain on the spine. Spinal fusion surgery is not helpful for mechanical lower back pain and may make the pain worse.

About the condition

Lower back pain is a very common condition and can affect a person's quality of life. However, it is rarely caused by serious disease and will often improve over time or with some changes to lifestyle. Surgery very rarely helps to improve back pain and should only be performed in certain rare cases. Medical evidence tells us that spinal fusion surgery is not recommended for mechanical lower back pain.

What are the **BENEFITS** of the surgery?

Experts agree that there is no clear benefit to performing spinal fusion surgery for most mechanical lower back pain.

What are the **RISKS**?

Spinal fusion surgery may not improve your symptoms and may make your back pain worse. Also, any surgery involves risks, including infection, bleeding, and how anaesthetics may affect you.

What are the **ALTERNATIVES**?

Continuing with day-to-day activities as much as possible can benefit many people. For some people, losing weight, physical exercise, physiotherapy and/or pain killers may also help. You can discuss alternatives, and what is best for you, with your doctor.

What if you do **NOTHING**?

Most back pain often settles by itself. However, for many people, periods of back pain may come and go throughout their life.

For more information on back pain see [Back pain - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

You can find out more about the [Evidence Based Interventions](#) programme online