

Spinal surgery patient-initiated follow-up (PIFU)

Information for patients

This leaflet provides further information for spinal surgery patients who have been placed on the patient-initiated follow-up (PIFU) pathway. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to any member of the team caring for you.

Introduction

King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust has introduced a pathway called patient-initiated follow-up (PIFU) for people who do not need frequent scheduled appointments. PIFU allows you to access support when you need it, rather than attending routine follow-up appointments when you are well. Arranging your own follow-up appointments means:

- being in control of your own care and getting help when you need it
- (for many people) coming into hospital less often, taking less time off work and spending less time travelling to hospital
- a more efficient service and shorter waiting times for patients who need an appointment
- reducing our carbon footprint by reducing the number of unnecessary journeys made to our hospitals

What is PIFU?

A patient-initiated follow-up (PIFU) means that we will not routinely book you an appointment. Instead, we put you in control of making an appointment with us within a given time frame.

Your surgeon may recommend the PIFU plan if it is safe for you to manage your own follow-up appointments. If you and your neurosurgical team agree you should go onto a PIFU plan, they will give you a list of 'trigger' symptoms in your clinic letter or discharge summary (see some examples on p 2). You should contact us to arrange an appointment if you experience any of these trigger symptoms.

Based on your disease or surgical procedure, you can make an appointment to see us within a given time frame of 3, 6 or 12 months. After this time, you will be discharged back to the care of your GP as usual.

When should I contact the team to make an appointment?

3-month time frame

If you had stable symptoms of disc herniation or spinal canal stenosis or were unsure you wanted a spinal procedure, you can contact us within 3 months of your last clinical

appointment if your symptoms have got worse, or you have changed your mind and want to have surgery. After this time, you will be discharged back to the care of your GP.

If you had a stable thoraco-lumbar fracture and have persistent pain over the fractured site, or you experience deterioration, you can contact us within 3 months of your injury date. After this time, you will be discharged back to the care of your GP.

6-month time frame

If you had:

- lumbar discectomy
- lumbar decompression
- posterior cervical decompression
- posterior cervical foraminotomy
- lumbar nerve root block or epidural injections
- medial branch block

you can contact us within 6 months of your surgical procedure date if you have trigger symptoms. After this time, you will be discharged back to the care of your GP.

12-month time frame

If you had:

- anterior cervical discectomy and fusion
- cervical disc replacement or corpectomy
- one or two level cervical, thoracic or lumbar fusions

you can contact us within 12 months of your surgical procedure date if you have trigger symptoms. After this time, you will be discharged back to the care of your GP.

What are the trigger symptoms?

- Worsening neurological pain that isn't managed by oral painkillers (such as burning, stabbing, or electric shock-like pain, tingling, numbness, or a 'pins and needles' feeling).
- Wound leak that continues after a course of antibiotics.
- Worsening existing neurological symptoms (such as weakness or paralysis of limbs, loss of sensation, changes in reflexes, loss of urinary or bowel control, altered or loss of sensation around the bottom, uncontrolled muscle spasms, severe back pain).

When shouldn't I contact the team?

- If you have any new sudden symptoms that were not present before (such as difficulty with bladder or bowel control, numbness around your bottom or groin, sciatica in both legs, new weakness), seek urgent medical attention at your local A&E.
- If you have a problem with a different condition or injury to the one you are followed up for by the spinal surgeons, contact your GP.
- If you require urgent medical advice, contact your GP, NHS 111 or 999.

How do I contact the team?

Contact us via email or telephone:

Email: kch-tr.pifu-spine@nhs.net

Telephone:

- ERAS (elective) patients: 020 3299 5877 or 020 3299 9416
- Trauma or acute spinal surgery patients: 020 3299 6803 or 020 3299 8380

Telephone lines and emails are monitored by our spinal CNS team Monday to Friday, from 9am to 4pm.

You will be asked to complete a series of questions to help us decide the urgency and type of review you need. Please be ready to provide us with your full name, date of birth, hospital number, and the name of the surgeon who is responsible for your treatment.

The spinal CNS team will review your responses and book you an appointment or deal with your query by forwarding it to the right person in the team. Please note, they are unlikely to answer your query themselves at the time of contact. Responses may take from 3 to 5 business days.

MyChart

Our MyChart app and website lets you securely access parts of your health record with us, giving you more control over your care. To sign up or for help, call us on 020 3299 4618 or email kings.mychart@nhs.net. Visit www.kch.nhs.uk/mychart to find out more.

Sharing your information

King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust has partnered with Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust through the King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at Guy's or St Thomas' hospitals. King's College Hospital and Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trusts share an electronic patient record system, which means information about your health record can be accessed safely and securely by health and care staff at both Trusts. For more information visit www.kch.nhs.uk.

Care provided by students

We provide clinical training where our students get practical experience by treating patients. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you do not want students to be involved in your care. Your treatment will not be affected by your decision.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams.

Tel: 020 3299 4618

Email: kings.pals@nhs.net

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact our Interpreting and Accessible Communication Support on 020 3299 4618 or email kings.access@nhs.net

Important information:

Hospital number:

Consultant:

Operation:

Date of surgery:

Date of 6 weeks post discharge follow-up (if applicable):

Imaging follow-up booked (the radiology department will send you an appointment letter if applicable):

MRI ☐ CT SCAN ☐ XRAY ☐

Discharge from PIFU: