Spinal surgery

Our specialist team provide a comprehensive service from initial assessment to discharge, with assessment and follow up after surgery carried out in our specialist outpatient clinic.

We provide specialist neurosurgery for primary spinal tumours, which happen when cells in the spine grow and multiply abnormally, as well as secondary tumours, where cancerous cells have spread from elsewhere in the body. Primary tumours are always benign, but can grow considerably and create pressure on the tissues which surround them. Secondary tumours, which are also known as metastasis, are more common, and usually follow primary tumours in the breast, lungs, prostate, kidneys or bowel.

The symptoms of a spinal tumour will depend on its size, location and which part of the spine is affected. They can include pain in or near the spine, unusual sensations, problems with the bladder and legs or spinal cord compression, which happens when pressure on the spinal cord interrupts nerve impulses to and from the brain.

If you have been referred to us by your GP, we will carry out a range of tests and use an MRI or CT scan to look at your spine in more detail. It’s important to remember that spinal tumours are rare, so your neurologist will need to carry out investigations to rule out any other conditions. We may also carry out a bone scan and a biopsy to help us diagnose the type of tumour you have more accurately, in turn helping us to treat it more effectively.

Once a diagnosis is confirmed, our multi-disciplinary team will discuss your case in detail before recommending the best treatment option for you. This will depend on the size and type of tumour you have, but could include radiotherapy, chemotherapy and surgery.

Surgery is the most common treatment for benign spinal tumours and can also be used to treat malignant tumours. The operation will be carried out under general anaesthetic by a highly skilled neurosurgeon, who will aim to remove the tumour without damaging the spinal cord or nerves. In some cases, the surgeon may feel it is safer to leave a small amount of the tumour behind rather than risk damage to the rest of the spine. If this is the case, you may be referred for radiotherapy to try and destroy the rest of the tumour.

Following surgery, we will book an appointment for you at our outpatient clinic where your neurosurgeon will be able to check how well you are recovering and refer you for any additional treatment, such as physiotherapy. Wherever necessary, we will also be able to
signpost you and your family to sources of practical support, such as help dealing with emotions.

We also run a dedicated clinic for patients who have fractured their spine. Our multi-disciplinary team, made up of consultants, registrars, specialist spinal physiotherapists and clinical nurse practitioners, will fully assess every patient before developing a care and treatment plan tailored for each individual.