

Austin Health Spine Specialist Clinic holds 1 session per week to discuss and plan the treatment of patients with spine conditions.

Department of Health clinical urgency categories for specialist clinics

Urgent: If the patient has a condition that has the potential to deteriorate quickly, with significant consequences for health and quality of life, if not managed promptly. These patients should be seen **within 30 days** of referral receipt. For emergency cases please send the patient to the Emergency Department.

Semi-Urgent: 31-90 days.

Routine: If the patient's condition is unlikely to deteriorate quickly or have significant consequences for the person's health and quality of life if specialist assessment is delayed beyond one month.

Exclusions: Acute Spinal Fracture: Please refer to Orthopaedic Spinal Clinic

Condition / Symptom	GP Management	Investigations Required Prior to Referral	Expected Triage Outcome
<p>Mechanical Low Back Pain</p> <p>Back Pain and Sciatica without Neurology</p> <p>Spinal Stenosis with Limitation of Walking Distance</p>	<p>When to Refer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Neurological Symptoms -Functional Impairment -Time off Work -Abnormal Weight Loss 	<p>To be included in referral</p> <p>Clinical history and examination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -History of injury/trauma -Duration of Symptoms -Neurological Symptoms -Treatment to date -Previous Spinal Surgery -Medications -Functional Impairment -Time off Work -Weight Loss <p>Imaging: XRAY (Erect AP & Lateral Spine), MRI, CT</p>	<p>Immediate/ED:</p> <p>If Cauda Equina, Foot Drop, Back Pain with Bladder/Bowel involvement or secondary to infection/disease</p> <p>Semi-Urgent:</p> <p>Severe Rheumatic Symptoms</p> <p>(hospital admission for pain over 2 admission lasting > 1 week)</p> <p>Routine:</p> <p>If symptoms are present over a 6 week period</p>
<p>Back pain and Sciatica with Neurological Deficit</p> <p>Back Pain secondary to Neoplastic Disease or Infection</p> <p>Back Pain with Bladder/Bowel Involvement (Cauda Equina)</p>	<p>When to Refer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Neurological Symptoms -Functional Impairment -Time off Work -Abnormal Weight Loss 	<p>To be included in referral</p> <p>Clinical history and examination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -History of injury/trauma -Duration of Symptoms -Neurological Symptoms -Treatment to date -Previous Spinal Surgery -Medications -Functional Impairment -Time off Work -Weight Loss <p>Imaging: XRAY (Erect AP & Lateral Spine), MRI, CT</p> <p>Bloods: FBE, Biochemistry, ESR, CRP</p>	<p>Immediate/ED:</p> <p>If Cauda Equina, Foot Drop, Back Pain with Bladder/Bowel involvement or secondary to infection/disease</p> <p>Urgent:</p> <p>Acute Sciatica Severe weakness in muscle power or sensory deficit</p> <p>Routine:</p> <p>Acute Sciatica – Mild weakness in muscle power or sensory deficit</p>

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<p>Neck Pain without Arm Pain</p> <p>Neck Pain with Arm Pain Without Neurology</p> <p>Neck Pain with Myelopathy</p>	<p>When to Refer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Neurological Symptoms -Functional Impairment -Time off Work -Abnormal Weight Loss 	<p>To be included in referral</p> <p>Clinical history and examination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -History of injury/trauma -Duration of Symptoms -Neurological Symptoms -Treatment to date -Previous Spinal Surgery -Medications -Functional Impairment -Time off Work -Weight Loss <p>Imaging: XRAY (Erect AP & Lateral Spine), MRI, CT</p> <p>Diagnostics: Neurophysiological studies if available</p>	<p>Immediate/ED:</p> <p>Cervical Myelopathy Acute neck pain Worsening neurology</p> <p>Semi Urgent:</p> <p>Acute Neck Pain: Severe weakness in muscle power or sensory deficit</p> <p>Routine:</p> <p>Acute Neck Pain: Moderate weakness in muscle power or sensory deficit</p>
<p>Spinal Deformity:</p> <p>Scoliosis</p>	<p>When to Refer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Neurological Symptoms -Functional Impairment -Time off Work -Abnormal Weight Loss 	<p>To be included in referral</p> <p>Clinical history and examination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Duration of Symptoms -Neurological Symptoms -Treatment to date -Previous Spinal Surgery -Medications -Functional Impairment -Time off Work -Weight Loss -Birth history -Growth history -Progression of curve history -Underlying neurological syndrome, chromosomal abnormality or tumour <p>Imaging: XRAY (Erect AP & Lateral Spine), MRI, CT</p>	<p>Semi Urgent:</p> <p>Less than 16 years of age</p> <p>Routine:</p> <p>Skeletally mature</p>