



DECISION AID

Spinal diseases

What are my treatment options?

You have been diagnosed with a spinal disease that is very likely the cause of your back pain. The type of symptoms you have and how they develop, and the examinations you might need, can vary depending on what is causing the symptoms in your spine.

The treatment options can also vary: Medication may be an option, but exercises to help with mobility or strength and spinal surgery could be suitable as well. There are often several possible options for treating one particular spinal disease. They could be used as alternative treatments, in combination, or as part of a treatment program.

This decision aid is designed to help you get an overview of the treatment options together with your doctor, and then make a decision for one or more suitable treatments.

GOOD TO KNOW:

Additional decision aids are available for some specific spinal diseases. They can help you to decide which treatment is right for you. In those cases, you also have a right to a second medical opinion free of charge. You can find out which conditions this applies to at

www.informedhealth.org/SecondOpinion

PERSONAL DECISION:

This decision aid doesn't provide all the information you will need to make a decision. It is intended to help you prepare for doctor's appointments, not to replace them.

IMPORTANT:

Don't let anyone force you to choose a certain treatment. Even if you find the symptoms very distressing, take the time to gather information and make a decision.



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Which treatment options are available to you?

Write down the different treatments and any alternative treatments that are an option for you:

Option 1:
Option 2:
Option 3:
...

You can talk to your doctor if you find it difficult to fill in the list. Here is a list of **typical treatment approaches used to treat spinal diseases**:

- Non-drug interventions:
 - Exercise, relaxation and positioning
 - Physical, passive or manual therapy
 - Occupational therapy
 - Traditional therapies such as acupuncture, reiki, or moxibustion
 - Behavioral therapy, such as special pain psychotherapy
- Medications:
 - Painkillers like ibuprofen
 - Stronger painkillers that have to be prescribed by a doctor
 - Injections near the spine to relieve pain or inflammation
- Surgery, such as to relieve pressure on nerves and blood vessels, to stabilize the spine, or to relieve pain

It is often a good idea to combine different therapies, such as medication and non-drug interventions. Multimodal treatment programs that combine several therapies are available especially if symptoms last for longer or become chronic. Various surgical treatments are sometimes combined, too, such as if the spine has to be stiffened but pressure first has to be relieved from nerves and blood vessels.

SUMMARY OF TREATMENT OPTIONS

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Write down:			
<p>What does the treatment involve?</p> <p>Is medication taken orally or injected? For how long and how often? Is a general anesthetic needed for surgery? What about a stay in the hospital?</p>			
<p>What is the aim of the treatment?</p> <p>Does it aim to relieve symptoms? Or does it aim to get rid of the cause?</p>			
<p>What is the success rate of the treatment?</p> <p>How many people feel better after the treatment? Are the symptoms relieved somewhat or do they go away completely? Are the benefits long-lasting?</p>			
<p>What are the possible side effects?</p> <p>What side effects can a medication have? What are the possible complications of surgery?</p>			
<p>What can I or must I do on my own?</p> <p>How active do I have to be – in the short or long term?</p>			
<p>Is the treatment an option for me?</p> <p>What symptoms is the treatment suitable for and as of when? Can I combine treatments? Do I have other medical conditions that mean the treatment isn't suitable? Or do I take medications that can cause interactions? Which treatment is most suitable for my daily life and best meets my expectations?</p>			

HELP WITH YOUR DECISION

You may still be unsure about which treatment you would prefer. You can write down your thoughts and questions here.

Which treatment would I consider?	What do I like about it?	What don't I like about it?
	<input type="radio"/>	
	<input type="radio"/>	
	<input type="radio"/>	

If you still aren't sure: What else do you need in order to make a decision?

It can be hard to choose a treatment with all the different pros and cons to consider, and also because you might be unfamiliar with some of the treatments.

If you need more help:

- You will find links to further information on the next page.
- You can talk to your doctor again.
- Get a second medical opinion. You will find information about this option on the next page, too.
- You can discuss the options with family and friends.
- Or you can contact a patient information center or a support group.



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You will find in-depth information about the following topics on the internet:

- Low back pain
www.informedhealth.org/low-back-pain.html
- Living with chronic back pain
www.informedhealth.org/living-with-chronic-back-pain.html
- Understanding chronic pain
www.informedhealth.org/understanding-chronic-pain.html
- At the hospital:
www.informedhealth.org/at-the-hospital.html
- Surgery:
www.informedhealth.org/surgery.html
- Detailed information on second medical opinions:
www.informedhealth.org/SecondOpinion

Preparing for the doctor's appointment

What remains unanswered? What are you most concerned about? Write down any questions or thoughts you may have, and take this decision aid with you to the appointment. You can ask the doctor about anything you would like to know or discuss anything you are worried about.

You will find a list of questions – and can choose those that are most important to you – here:

- www.informedhealth.org/questions



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Publishing details

This decision aid was developed by the Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care (IQWiG, Germany). You will find information about our work and the sources used here:

- www.informedhealth.org/our-approach

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