

# Exeter Spinal Patient Initiated Follow-Up (PIFU)

Telephone: **01392 406149**

Email: **rduh.PifuSpinalServiceexeter@nhs.net**

## Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please contact the PALS desk on **01392 402093** or at **rduh.pals-eastern@nhs.net**.

## What is Patient-Initiated Follow-Up (PIFU)?

Patient-initiated follow-up (PIFU) puts you, the patient, in control of when you are seen by The Exeter Spinal Unit. It means spending less time attending hospital appointments, but still having access to clinical support when you need it.

If your condition is stable, you may not find it helpful to attend regular outpatient appointments scheduled by the hospital. Sometimes, these appointments may not result in any change to your treatment, but you'll have spent time and energy putting arrangements in place to attend your appointment. Your condition may flare up in between regular booked appointments and it's at this point that you really do need our input. With PIFU, you can get advice from your clinical team, who may suggest an appointment is required.

You initiate the follow-up appointment, instead of the hospital. Which is why this process is called patient-initiated follow-up (PIFU).

For all other concerns, or if you are feeling unwell, your GP will remain your first point of contact.

## How will I know if I'm suitable for PIFU?

The Exeter Spinal team will tell you if your condition is now suitable for PIFU, instead of regular appointments scheduled by the hospital.

It is entirely your decision. You can continue with regular appointments if you want to. Your clinician will have advised you about the PIFU process and given you this patient leaflet to support you.

## When should I call for a PIFU?

You should call if you experience a flare-up of/ change in your symptoms.

### Key symptoms that should trigger a follow-up appointment request

- Any new or progressive weakness in the limbs or any bilateral symptoms that were one sided originally

PIFU is not a replacement for urgent medical advice. If you require urgent medical advice, you should contact your GP, NHS 111, your local walk-in centre or, if you are really unwell, your local Emergency Department (A&E)

## How will I book a patient-initiated appointment?

This is a quick and easy process.

If you have a flare-up of/change in your symptoms and need advice or an appointment, just follow the steps below and the team will help you.

### 5 easy steps:

1. Call or email the Exeter Spinal team  
PIFU direct telephone: **01392 406149**  
Email: **rduh.PifuSpinalServiceexeter@nhs.net**  
If you need to leave a message when you call, please leave the following information:
  - Your full name and date of birth
  - Your hospital number and/or NHS number
  - A telephone number so we can call you back during our opening hours
2. Explain to the Exeter Spinal team you are having a flare-up and need some clinical advice.
3. The team will review your concerns and decide whether you need immediate clinical advice for your symptoms or if you need an appointment.
4. If the team think you need an appointment, we will contact you to agree an appointment date and time. We will arrange an appointment for you within 10 working days.
5. Attend your clinic appointment.

## Will you still be looking after me if I'm on PIFU and don't initiate an appointment?

Depending on your condition, you may be offered a follow-up appointment after a length of time decided by your consultant or clinical team, to check that your condition is still stable.

For some conditions, your clinical team will decide that if you have not initiated an appointment within that time, you can be discharged back to your GP. If your condition then changes, you will need to get another referral from your GP or care provider.

## What if I am worried and change my mind about this style of follow-up?

Just tell us and we will go back to booking regular hospital appointments for you. Our team are happy to discuss any concerns with you.

## PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call **01392 402093** or email **rduh.pals-eastern@nhs.net**. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital (Wonford).

## Have your say

Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

The Trust cannot accept any responsibility for the accuracy of the information given if the leaflet is not used by Royal Devon staff undertaking procedures at the Royal Devon hospitals.

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