

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND CARE EXCELLENCE

Guideline scope

Low back pain and sciatica in over 16s: assessment and management

This guideline will update the NICE guideline on Low back pain and sciatica in over 16s: assessment and management (NG59).

The guideline will be developed using the methods and processes outlined in [developing NICE guidelines: the manual](#).

1 Why the update is needed

New evidence that could affect recommendations was identified through the surveillance process. Topic experts, including those who helped to develop the existing guideline, advised NICE on whether areas should be updated or new areas added. Full details are set out in the [surveillance review decision](#).

Why the guideline is needed

Please see original guideline [scope](#).

2 Who the guideline is for

This guideline is for:

- healthcare professionals
- commissioners and providers of healthcare
- people with low back pain or sciatica, and their families and carers.

NICE guidelines cover health and care in England. Decisions on how they apply in other UK countries are made by ministers in the [Welsh Government](#), [Scottish Government](#) and [Northern Ireland Executive](#).

Equality considerations

NICE carried out [an equality impact assessment](#) during development of the original guideline. The assessment:

- lists equality issues identified, and how they have been addressed
- explains why any groups are excluded from the guideline.

3 What the updated guideline will cover

3.1 Who is the focus?

Groups that will be covered

- People aged 16 or older presenting with symptoms of ‘non-specific’ low back pain. The pain may (or may not) radiate to the limbs and is not associated with progressive neurological deficit.
- People aged 16 or older with suspected sciatica.

No subgroups have been identified as needing specific consideration.

3.2 Settings

Settings that will be covered

All settings where NHS funded care is provided

3.3 Activities, services or aspects of care

Key areas that will be covered in this update

We will look at evidence in the area below when developing this update. We will consider making new recommendations or updating existing recommendations in this area only.

- 1 Non-invasive treatments for sciatica
 - Pharmacological interventions

Proposed outline for the guideline

The table below outlines all the areas that will be included in the guideline. It sets out what NICE plans to do for each area in this update.

Area in the guideline	What NICE plans to do
1.1 Assessment of low back pain and sciatica	
Alternative diagnosis	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Risk assessment and risk stratification tools	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Imaging	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
1.2 Non-invasive treatment for low back pain and sciatica	
Non-pharmacological therapies	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Pharmacological therapies	Review evidence for sciatica and update existing recommendations as needed. No evidence review for low back pain: retain recommendations from existing guideline
1.3 Invasive treatment for low back pain and sciatica	
Non-surgical interventions	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Surgical interventions	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline

Recommendations in areas that are being retained from the existing guideline may be edited to ensure that they meet current editorial standards, and reflect the current policy and practice context.

Related NICE guidance

Published

- [Workplace health: long-term sickness absence and capability to work](#). NICE guideline 149 (2019).
- [iFuse for treating chronic sacroiliac joint pain](#). NICE medical technologies guidance 39 (2018)
- [Transaxial interbody lumbosacral fusion for severe chronic low back pain](#). NICE interventional procedures guidance 620 (2018).
- [Minimally invasive sacroiliac joint fusion surgery for chronic sacroiliac pain](#). NICE interventional procedures guidance 578 (2017).
- [Lateral interbody fusion in the lumbar spine for low back pain](#). NICE interventional procedures guidance 574 (2017).
- [Epiduroscopic lumbar discectomy through the sacral hiatus for sciatica](#). NICE interventional procedures guidance 570 (2016).
- [Percutaneous interlaminar endoscopic lumbar discectomy for sciatica](#). NICE interventional procedures guidance 555 (2016).
- [Percutaneous intradiscal radiofrequency treatment of the intervertebral disc nucleus for low back pain](#). NICE interventional procedures guidance 545 (2016).
- [Percutaneous electrothermal treatment of intervertebral disc annulus for low back pain and sciatica](#). NICE interventional procedures guidance 544 (2016).
- [Percutaneous coblation of the intervertebral disc for low back pain and sciatica](#). NICE interventional procedures guidance 543 (2016).
- [Insertion of an annular disc implant at lumbar discectomy](#). NICE interventional procedures guidance 506 (2016).
- [Suspected cancer: recognition and referral](#). NICE guideline 12 (2015).
- [Osteoarthritis: care and management](#). NICE clinical guideline 177 (2014).
- [Neuropathic pain in adults: pharmacological management in non-specialist settings](#). NICE clinical guideline 173 (2013).

- [Percutaneous vertebroplasty and percutaneous balloon kyphoplasty for treating osteoporotic vertebral compression fractures](#). NICE technology appraisal guidance 279 (2013).
- [Peripheral nerve-field stimulation for chronic low back pain](#). NICE interventional procedures guidance 451 (2013).
- [EOS 2D/3D imaging system](#). NICE diagnostics guidance 1 (2011).
- [Non-rigid stabilisation techniques for the treatment of low back pain](#). NICE interventional procedures guidance 366 (2010).
- [Interspinous distraction procedures for lumbar spinal stenosis causing neurogenic claudication](#). NICE interventional procedures guidance 365 (2010).
- [Percutaneous intradiscal laser ablation in the lumbar spine](#). NICE interventional procedures guidance 357 (2010).
- [Therapeutic endoscopic division of epidural adhesions](#). NICE interventional procedures guidance 333 (2010).
- [Depression with a chronic physical health problem: recognition and management](#). NICE clinical guideline 91 (2009).
- [Depression in adults: recognition and management](#). NICE clinical guideline 90 (2009).
- [Prosthetic intervertebral disc replacement in the lumbar spine](#). NICE interventional procedures guidance 306 (2009).
- [Metastatic spinal cord compression in adults: risk assessment, diagnosis and management](#). NICE clinical guidance 75 (2008).
- [Spinal cord stimulation for chronic pain of neuropathic or ischaemic origin](#). NICE technology appraisal guidance 159 (2008).
- [Automated percutaneous mechanical lumbar discectomy](#). NICE interventional procedures guidance 141 (2005).
- [Endoscopic laser foraminoplasty](#). NICE interventional procedures guidance 31 (2003).

NICE guidance that will be updated by this guideline

- [Low back pain and sciatica in over 16s: assessment and management](#). (2016) NICE guideline NG59.

NICE guidance about the experience of people using NHS services

NICE has produced the following guidance on the experience of people using the NHS. This guideline will not include additional recommendations on these topics unless there are specific issues related to low back pain and sciatica:

- [Medicines optimisation](#) (2015) NICE guideline NG5
- [Patient experience in adult NHS services](#) (2012) NICE guideline CG138
- [Service user experience in adult mental health](#) (2011) NICE guideline CG136
- [Medicines adherence](#) (2009) NICE guideline CG76

3.4 Economic aspects

We will take economic aspects into account when making recommendations. We will develop an economic plan that states for each review question (or key area in the scope) whether economic considerations are relevant, and if so whether this is an area that should be prioritised for economic modelling and analysis. We will review the economic evidence and carry out economic analyses, using an NHS, public sector and other perspectives, as appropriate.

3.5 Key outcomes and draft question

While writing the scope for this updated guideline, we have identified the following key issue and draft question related to it:

- 1 Non-invasive treatments for sciatica - Pharmacological interventions
 - 1.1 What is the clinical and cost effectiveness of pharmacological treatment in the management of sciatica?

The key issues and draft questions will be used to develop more detailed review questions, which guide the systematic review of the literature.

3.6 Main outcomes

The main outcomes that may be considered when searching for and assessing the evidence are:

- Pain severity (for example, visual analogue scale [VAS] or numeric rating scale [NRS]).
- Function measured by disability scores (for example, the Roland-Morris disability questionnaire or the Oswestry disability index).
- Health-related quality of life (for example, SF-12 or EQ-5D).
- Return to work.
- Adverse events.
- Healthcare utilisation.

4 NICE quality standards and NICE Pathways

4.1 NICE quality standards

NICE quality standards that may need to be revised or updated when this guideline is published

- [Low back pain and sciatica in over 16s](#) (2017) NICE quality standard 155

4.2 NICE Pathways

When this guideline is published, we will update the existing NICE Pathway on [low back pain and sciatica](#). NICE Pathways bring together everything NICE has said on a topic in an interactive flowchart.

5 Further information

This is the final scope.

The guideline is expected to be published: to be confirmed.

You can follow progress of the [guideline](#).

Our website has information about how [NICE guidelines](#) are developed.

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