Cervical Stenosis and Myelopathy

One-page summary of the full Spinemathema guide. Scan the QR code for the full guide, with references and audio.

Key points

- Cervical stenosis is a narrowing of the spinal canal in the neck, usually caused by age-related wear. When it presses on the spinal cord and affects how it works, this is called myelopathy.
- Typical signs are clumsy or numb hands, unsteady walking and a heavy feeling in the legs. These often creep on slowly and can be mistaken for normal ageing.
- Myelopathy tends to get worse over time rather than better, so surgery is commonly recommended to protect the cord.
- The main aim of an operation is to stop further damage. Some people also regain a degree of function, especially if treated before damage is severe.

Seek urgent medical help (A&E or 999) if you have:

- A sudden or rapid worsening of hand clumsiness, weakness or walking
- New loss of bladder or bowel control, or numbness around the genitals or back passage
- Weakness or numbness in arms or legs after a fall or neck injury

If you have been diagnosed with cervical stenosis, avoid activities with a high risk of falls or neck injury until you have discussed them with your specialist.

Not sure how urgent it is? Call NHS 111. More warning signs: spinemathema.com/warning-signs

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General information only, not personal medical advice.
If you are worried about your symptoms, contact your GP, NHS 111, or in an emergency call 999.

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