SPECT-CT Scans of the Spine

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

Key points

- SPECT-CT combines a nuclear medicine bone scan, which shows how active the bone is, with a CT scan, which shows its exact shape.
- It can help to pinpoint which part of the spine is likely to be causing pain when other scans show several possible culprits.
- It is used to look for painful facet joints, stress fractures of the pars and problems after fusion surgery, such as loose screws.
- Expect the visit to take 3 to 4 hours in total, including a wait of 2 to 3 hours between the injection and the scan.
- Tell the department beforehand if you are, or could be, pregnant, or if you are breastfeeding.

Call 999 or go to A&E now if you have back pain or sciatica with:

- Numbness or tingling around your bottom, genitals or inner thighs
- New difficulty passing urine, or not feeling when your bladder is full
- New leaking of urine, or loss of bowel control
- New loss of sexual sensation or function
- Pain, numbness or weakness in both legs, or leg weakness getting worse quickly

These can be signs of cauda equina syndrome. Do not wait for an appointment.

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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Scan for the full guide