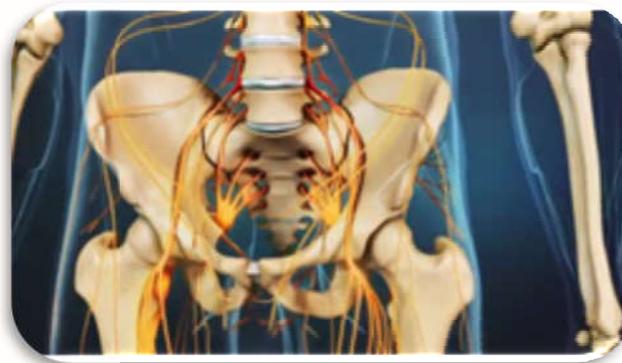

Cauda Equina

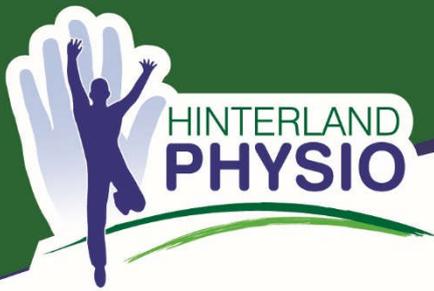
Are you experiencing altered sensation, or severe or progressive weakness or numbness in the lower extremities, urinary or bowel incontinence, lower back pain and sharp stabbing pain in the leg?



Cauda Equina Syndrome is caused by the compression of nerves in the lumbar spine and a narrowing of the spinal canal. If you are experiencing symptoms such as altered sensation, weakness, numbness in the lower extremities, together with urinary or bowel incontinence and lower back pain you might have Cauda Equina Syndrome. It is important that you seek for help ASAP as this condition requires an emergency surgical decompression. If you are unsure about your symptoms, physiotherapists at Hinterland Physiotherapy can assist you with a thorough assessment.

Cauda equina syndrome is a relatively rare but serious condition that describes extreme pressure and swelling of the nerves at the end of the spinal cord. It gets its name from Latin, "horse's tail," because the nerves at the end of the spine visually resemble a horse's tail as they extend from the spinal cord down the back of each leg.

Cauda equina syndrome is a serious medical emergency that requires testing and possibly urgent surgical intervention. If patients with cauda equina syndrome do not get treatment quickly, adverse



results can include permanent paralysis, impaired bladder and/or bowel control, difficulty walking, and/or other neurological and physical problems.

These are the most common causes of cauda equina syndrome:

- **A severe ruptured disk in the lumbar area (the most common cause).**
- **Narrowing of the spinal canal (stenosis).**
- **A spinal lesion or malignant tumour.**
- **A spinal infection, inflammation, haemorrhage, or fracture.**
- **A complication from a severe lumbar spine injury such as a car crash, fall, gunshot, or stabbing.**
- **A birth defect such as an abnormal connection between blood vessels.**

Cauda Equina can be diagnosed with a physical examination to assess your strength, reflexes, sensation, stability, alignment, and motion. You may also need blood tests.

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan or computed tomography (CT scan) are also used by doctors.

Even with treatment, patients may not retrieve full function. It depends on how much damage has occurred. If surgery is successful, you may continue to recover bladder and bowel function over a period of years.

If permanent damage has occurred, surgery cannot always repair it. Your cauda equina syndrome is chronic. You will need to learn ways to adapt to changes in your body's functioning. You'll find that both physical and emotional support is essential.