

Suspected neurological conditions: recognition and referral

Information for the public

Published: 1 May 2019

www.nice.org.uk

Recognising neurological conditions in children, young people and adults

A neurological condition is an illness or injury that affects the brain, spine, muscles or nerves. There are many different neurological conditions. Some are lifelong, and some get better over time. They can be inherited, like muscular dystrophy. They can also develop during childhood, like some types of epilepsy. Some conditions, such as motor neurone disease or Parkinson's disease, are more common later in life. Neurological problems can also happen suddenly at any age, after a head injury or stroke.

One in 10 visits to GPs are about neurological symptoms. These symptoms range widely, from speech and memory to muscle, movement, balance and coordination problems. Neurological conditions often look like lots of other conditions, making them hard to spot.

We want this guideline to make a difference to anyone who might have a neurological condition by making sure:

- GPs can recognise when symptoms could have a neurological cause
- GPs and doctors in emergency departments know when to refer people to a specialist straight away and when to do more tests first
- people who most need to see a specialist can see one sooner
- people are not referred to a specialist if they don't need to be.

Working with you

Your GP should give you clear information, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns. They should explain:

- what they suspect is causing your symptoms and what will happen next
- if you do need to see a specialist, how quickly you should expect to be seen.

If you can't understand the information you are given, tell your GP.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

In the news

Read NICE news about how this guideline will help.

New NICE guideline will help doctors recognise and refer people with suspected neurological conditions



NICE's new guideline is the first to offer comprehensive information on neurological conditions to help non-specialist healthcare professionals to identify people who should be referred for specialist assessment and care.

Where can I find out more?

The [NHS website](#) has more information about different neurological conditions. NICE has also written [guidance about some neurological conditions](#).

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [Brain and Spine Foundation](#), 0808 808 1000
- [Epilepsy Action](#), 0808 800 5050
- [Motor Neurone Disease Association](#), 0808 802 6262
- [Muscular Dystrophy UK](#), 0800 652 6352
- [Parkinson's UK](#), 0808 800 0303
- [Stroke Association](#), 0303 3033 100

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#).

We wrote this guideline with people who have been affected by neurological conditions and staff who treat and support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

ISBN: 978-1-4731-2805-7