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The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

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New imaging guidelines - Adult Lower Back Pain

Research is constantly changing how we diagnose and treat illness. Just as drugs are regularly revised, so too are the tests we use when making a diagnosis.

The information in this leaflet is based on the guidance issued in November 2016 by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE). Therefore Salisbury Hospital, is required to follow these guidelines.

Research has shown that scans and X-rays do not help with the diagnosis and treatment of (non-specific) back pain, with or without sciatica. Therefore Salisbury Hospital, along with all other hospitals in the country, no longer routinely scans or X-rays the lower back in patients with (non-specific) back pain.

There is another concern. Exposure to radiation is strictly controlled by criminal legislation and Radiographers are not permitted to perform unjustified X-ray imaging outside NICE guidelines.

Very occasionally a scan or X-ray may be appropriate if a GP raises specific concerns.

We are sorry if you have attended expecting a scan or X-ray. We wrote to all local GPs in September 2017 reminding them not to refer patients with (non-specific) back pain. Please see your GP for further advice.