



Pain Relief Advice

Anti-inflammatory tablets or painkillers may have been prescribed or alternatively can be purchased from your local pharmacy.

These will help with stiffness and pain but may not be suitable for all patients. Paracetamol may be a suitable alternative.

If in doubt you should consult your GP or pharmacist before taking any medication.

Keep all medicines out of the reach of children.

Call now for more information

01335 230079

www.dchs.nhs.uk

Advice For People with Low Back Pain

This leaflet is designed to supplement the advice given by your GP or Physiotherapist. It is to help you with your present back injury and enable you to look after your back in the future. The information is written by Physiotherapists and based on the latest research.

Back Facts

- Most people get some back pain at some point in their lives -it could be said that back pain is normal!
- Most back pain settles very quickly, but about half the people who get back ache will have it again. What you learn now will help you in the future.
- Even when back pain is very severe it is rarely due to a serious disease, and you can still recover quickly. The spine is extremely strong, and very difficult to damage. Most back pain comes from the muscles, ligaments and joints in your spine, but in most people we cannot identify the exact source of pain.
- X-rays are not particularly helpful in identifying what is wrong—the changes seen on x-ray are normal changes that come with age.
- **The best approach to back pain is to gently get it moving, to stay as active as possible, to do progressive exercises, and to keep fit.**
- **We now know movement is better than rest for back pain.**

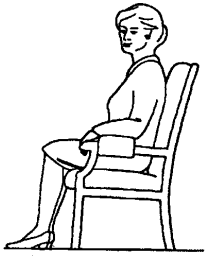
Looking after your back in the future

Back pain very commonly returns – that is the normal experience for many people. What you have learnt by managing this episode will be useful in the future. Episodes of back pain do not necessarily indicate further damage or deterioration in the health of your back.

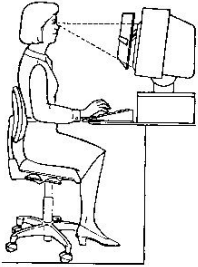
Key things to remember:

- The fitter, more active and more supple you are the more successful you are likely to be in managing any further episodes. Keep on top of your back problem by exercising regularly.
- Remember a good posture is good for a healthy back. When your back begins to be uncomfortable it may simply be saying it is time for a change of posture.
- Remember the importance of frequent changes of activity. Limiting the time you remain in one position can always be beneficial - not just when your back is playing up.
- If your back pain returns use the same things that helped you get back to normal this time.
- When you start to increase your fitness do so in a gradual way. Start with an easy level of exercise for you and do more as you feel able.
- Judge this through levels of effort; do not be too concerned if you experience some back pain. Sore but safe is ok

KEEP FIT FOR A FIT BACK



3. When you are sitting a support in the low back may help - use it where it is most comfortable



4. If sitting and working adjust your seat to gain maximum comfort. **Remember to change position frequently, and get up regularly and walk around**



5. **If you have to sit or bend for prolonged periods it is beneficial to interrupt this at regular intervals. Walk about, change positions frequently, have a stretch and move your back in a way that feels good. If you have been bent forward try bending backwards a few times, this may be helpful - it may hurt initially but try a few repetitions. Remember pain in this circumstance is not an indication of further damage to your back - but that it has stiffened up and needs some movement.**

- Those people who avoid activity and wait for the pain to get better tend to cope less well. If the pain is severe you may need to modify your activity for 1-2 days - but the important thing is to get moving again as quickly as you can.
- It is reasonable to expect to be able to return to normal activities **within the first week.**
- **Exercise is good for your back** - Exercise strengthens your bones and muscles, keeps you supple, and makes you feel better by releasing natural chemicals that reduce pain. People who cope with the pain by being positive, staying active and staying at work tend to do better.

Start with small amounts of movement and build up the time you do it. Even if your back is sore you can still start to exercise in gentle ways by :-

- Light activities
- Walking
- Using an exercise bike - if one is readily available
- Swimming

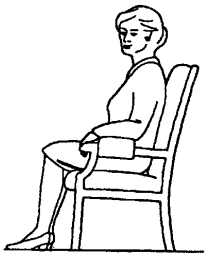
It may hurt a little at first - but hurt does not necessarily mean damage. It should get easier to do. The longer you put off moving the more difficult it will be to get going.

- **If you rest too much the pain may get worse and getting going may become more difficult. There are no magic wands to make backs better.** Therapy and medication may help you get moving, **but you can do so much to help yourself and you may not need any extra help.**
- The pain may be a bit worse when you start moving, don't worry; movement will help loosen you up and ease the pain. **Motion is lotion to soothe the pain.**

When pain is most severe

(in the first week or two)

1. You may be able to manage by simply reducing your more vigorous activity, or the speed at which you do things. Have some 'relative rest' but **avoid complete bed rest**. If you have to rest in bed do so for short periods, and get up and move about every so often. Stay calm if it hurts a bit when you first get going.
2. Use of regular medication may be helpful in the early stage to control pain and enable movement. Seek the advice of a GP, pharmacist or Non-medical prescriber for further help.



3. When sitting choose a supportive comfortable sitting position, it is often helpful to change your position more frequently than usual. Your back may become uncomfortable and remind you to change position, this will occur well before sitting becomes harmful.
4. **Resume normal activities as soon as possible. A recovering back likes movement. Walking, especially, is a safe activity with which to start. Walking on the flat or on a hill is OK. Remember to pace yourself accordingly.**

If you are experiencing leg pain and can find a movement or position which eases it (even if the back pain increases a bit), use this as part of your management. It may be helpful, in the short term to avoid activities that seem to create more lasting leg pain.

Lifting, bending and driving can sometimes aggravate symptoms, so take these activities carefully to begin with.

If you are working, attempt to pace activities so you do not spend long periods of time doing just one task. Take more breaks. Staying at work may be helpful to your recovery.

As things start to get easier

If you follow the advice above you can expect your pain to improve.

The time when improvement occurs varies between individuals, but usually the symptoms are easing by the second week, if not earlier. Any injury will be healing now, and movement is essential to encourage the healing process.

1. Gradually increase activity. Walking or swimming may be good activities to do, or any other activities that you enjoy doing.
2. Gradually increase your sitting time. You will find you can increase the time as your recovery progresses.