



Persistent Back Pain With or Without Leg Pain Information and Exercise Leaflet for Patient's and Carers

Back problems

Back problems are very common and can be caused by staying in one position too long or lifting something awkwardly. Most back problems start for no obvious reason, which can be very frustrating.

Your back problem may cause hot, burning, shooting or stabbing pains in your back and sometimes into one or both of your legs. You may also get pins and needles. These can be due to nerve pain.

The spine is strong and back problems are rarely due to any serious disease or damage. Back problems should settle within 6 weeks of following the advice provided here.

You will not normally need an X-ray or an MRI scan.

Should I be resting or moving?

- Keep moving, even if you move slowly at first.
- Do whatever you normally would and stay at or return to work. This is important and is the best way to get better.
- Change positions regularly wherever you are.
- Do not sit down for too long.
- Resting in bed does not help back pain.
- Try to find a position that reduces any pains you may have in your back and / or leg(s).
- Try to stay active but remember not to carry out activities which aggravate any pain you may have in your back and / or leg(s).
- Exercise really helps your back and can relieve pain.

Should I take painkillers?

Painkillers can help you keep moving. However, it is important that if you are already taking medication for something else or have other health problems you check with the pharmacist at your local chemist before taking painkillers for your back problem.

- You can use simple, over-the-counter painkillers (such as paracetamol) or anti-inflammatory medicines (such as ibuprofen) to help your pain. You can take both these medicines together.

- Always follow the instructions on the packet.
- You can only take two 500mg paracetamol every four to six hours and no more than eight 500mg paracetamol in 24 hours. You should not take any more than this amount.
- You can only take three 400mg ibuprofen a day. You should not take ibuprofen if you have stomach problems such as ulcers, have had a previous allergic reaction to ibuprofen or had an injury in the last 48 hours. Always take ibuprofen with or just after food. Don't take ibuprofen if you are pregnant.
- If you have asthma, ibuprofen may make it worse but if you have taken it before with no problems then you can safely take it again. If you are not sure, speak to your pharmacist.
- Take them regularly, not just when you are sore, for the next three to four days only.
- **If you feel you still need pain relief after four days then speak to your pharmacist for advice.**

Should I use ice or a heat pad?

If you have had an injury or flare-up of an old problem in the last two days, wrap crushed ice in a damp towel and hold it for five to ten minutes against the part of your back that hurts. You can do this every two to three hours. Make sure you use a damp towel between the ice and the skin to avoid an ice burn.

Alternatively, you could try sports sprays and gel packs which do a similar job.

After two days you may find that heat is more relaxing. You could use a heat pad or a hot water bottle with an insulated cover on it. Make sure this is not too hot and not directly touching your skin. You should do this for 10 to 15 minutes, three to four times a day.

What about work?

You will recover faster and everybody will benefit if you can stay at or get back to work as early as possible. Don't worry if your back still hurts as you may only have to do light work at first. Try to stay active and remember to keep moving. Speak to your manager about any concerns you may have.

For free and confidential advice about work, call the **Healthy Working Lives Advice Line** on 0800 019 2211.

What about sports?

You should take time before you take part in any sports after a back problem. If you take part in sports too soon you could flare things up again. Be prepared, however, for slight discomfort at first. You should only take part in sports when you can move freely. Remember to stretch and warm up fully before sports.

Can my back problems cause trouble anywhere else?

Your back problem may cause hot, burning, shooting or stabbing pains into one or both of your legs (sometimes called sciatica). You may also get pins and needles. This can be due to nerve pain. If you have these for more than one week, you may be able to take other, more appropriate medication. You should speak to your doctor about this.

Do I need to see my doctor?

Not normally. If you follow the right advice and take the right medication, your back problem should improve over the next six weeks.

WARNING SIGNS

If you have severe pain which is getting worse over several weeks, or if you are unwell with back pain, you should consult your doctor.

The following symptoms are very rare, but if you suddenly develop any of them, you should seek medical advice straight away.

- Severe pain in back, buttocks, perineum, genitalia, thighs and legs, **and**
- Loss of sensation, pins and needles or weakness in one or both legs
- Saddle numbness (loss of feeling in the body areas that sit on a saddle – buttocks, anus and genitals, inability to feel toilet paper when wiping)
- Recent onset of bladder dysfunction (inability to urinate / difficulty initiating urination / loss of sensation when you pass urine / incontinence/ loss of the full bladder sensation)
- Recent onset of bowel dysfunction (bowel incontinence / constipation / loss of sensation when passing a bowel motion)
- Recent loss of sexual function (inability to achieve erection or ejaculate/ loss of sensation during intercourse)

**If you are experiencing any of these symptoms,
seek immediate medical advice.
The quicker the diagnosis, the less damage done.**

Further information

- **Back in Control** (www.backincontrol.org.uk)
- **Scottish Centre for Health Working Lives** (www.healthworkinglives.com)
- **Musculoskeletal Zone and smartphone app from NHS inform**
(www.nhsinform.co.uk/msk)

Facts and Figures

- 90% of the UK population get back pain at some point.
- Most back pain settles within six weeks.
- Back pain can return.



Sleeping Positions

Provided by : Physiotherapy Spinal Service

Date : 02/02/2015

Here are some positions that may help to ease your back pain when trying to sleep.



If side-lying try to lie on your non painful side.

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Put a pillow or a rolled up towel in your waist to support your back.



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Try one or two pillows between your knees.
Support your head with enough pillows to prevent you neck bending.



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Place 2 pillows under your knees when sleeping on your back



If sleeping on your front, try 1 or 2 pillows under your stomach

Provided by : Physiotherapy Spinal Service

Date : 02/02/2015

Try some of these rest positions to ease your back pain instead of sitting



Resting Positions

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Lying face down with a cushion under your stomach. You may need several cushions.

Relax for a while in this position.

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Lying face down, leaning on your elbows/forearms.

Try to use this as an alternative to sitting.

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Lying on your back with knees bent. Hands resting by your sides.

Try to use this as an alternative to sitting.



Lying on a bed with both legs on a chair, hips and knees bent at right angles and both your arms above your head

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Tools RG
Know how to show how

General Mobility Exercises (1)

Provided by : Physiotherapy Spinal Service

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These exercises are aimed at improving the flexibility of your spine and should help to reduce your pain.

Make sure that you start your exercises at an intensity that you feel your body will be able to cope with.

Gradually build up the number of repetitions and frequency of the exercises up to 3 sets daily.

Try to break the exercises up so that you are doing them little and often.

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Lying with your knees bent and your feet on the floor.

Lift one knee towards your chest. Place your hands behind the knee and draw it into your chest. Repeat with your other leg

Repeat 5-15 times.

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Lying with your knees bent and feet on the floor. Lift your knees towards your chest.

Place your hands behind both knees and draw them towards your chest.

Repeat 5-15 times.

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Lying on your back with knees together and bent.

Slowly roll your knees from side to side keeping your upper trunk still.

Repeat 5-15 times.

General Mobility Exercises (2)



Standing.
Bend sideways at the waist.
Repeat 5-15 times.

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Stand straight with feet apart.
Support your back with your hands while bending your back as far backwards as possible. Keep your knees straight during the exercise.
Repeat 5-15 times.

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Lying on your back with knees bent and arms by your side.
Tighten your stomach muscles and press the small of your back against the floor letting your bottom rise. Hold 5 secs. - relax.
Repeat 5-15 times.

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Try walking short distances briskly each day

Some useful links to on-line videos for management of your spinal pain.

Permission has been obtained from Dr Mike Heinrich to allow access to the videos on Dr. Mike's YouTube channel. Dr Mike Heinrich, Director of Operation, Evans Health Lab.

How to Manage Your Spinal Pain

Low Back Pain

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BOjTegn9RuY&feature=player_embedded

How to Build Exercise into Your Day

23 and 1/2 hours - What is the single best thing we can do for our health?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUalnS6HIGo>

Let's make our day harder - Review of some of the science around how our typical days have shifted with technology and culture and the impact on our health.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whPuRLi4c0&feature=player_detailpage

Why your doctor might not have requested an MRI Scan

Should you have an MRI scan for Low Back Pain?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OjZaN0s26xo>

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