

Back Pain

60% - 80% of people in the UK are affected by back pain at any one time.

There are many structures within the spine that can cause pain and loss of function. These include:

The intervertebral disc

The facet joints (Joints either side of the spine)

Ligaments

Muscles

Nerves

On many occasions it is difficult to identify one specific structure at fault as each structure interacts with each other.

Back pain can be acute or chronic. Acute back pain can be the result of a single specific incident or the accumulation of poor behaviours or movements. Acute back pain is often associated with inflammation and muscle spasm, whereas chronic pain can be as a result of degenerative changes and general wear and tear to spinal structures.

Leg Symptoms (Sciatica)

If a nerve in your back becomes irritated or compressed you may experience symptoms in your leg. This often referred to as **sciatica**. These Symptoms may include pain, pins and needles, numbness and weakness.

The nerve may be being compressed or irritated as it leaves the spinal cord by injury or inflammation to any of the spinal structures.

If you develop any bladder or bowel problems or sudden weakness in your legs you should contact your doctor immediately.

Most acute back pains and sciatica resolve spontaneously within 6 weeks. However should the back pain last for longer than this, become recurrent or more disabling then a full assessment by a chartered physiotherapist may help to identify the cause of the problem and enable appropriate treatments to be given to alleviate your symptoms.

Treatments for Back Pain and Sciatica

Following a full and thorough assessment of your movement and dysfunction, a chartered physiotherapist could offer the following

techniques to help alleviate your symptoms and restore you to full function.

Joint mobilisations

Acupuncture

Joint manipulations

Deep soft tissue massage

Myofascial release

Trigger point techniques

Electrotherapy including, interferential and ultrasound

Core stability

Exercise programme

Postural education

Biomechanical correction

Gait re-education

Taping/strapping

Advice on self management techniques

Simple advice for when you have Back Pain

- DON'T** bend over for prolonged periods or bend repetitively
- DO** change activity or position to one such as crouching or kneeling.
- DON'T:** lift anything without first asking 'do I have to?'
- DO** use good lifting technique by bending your knees and keeping the load close to you. Try to break up the load into smaller weight parcels or seek assistance of others.
- DON'T** Slouch or sit in a low soft chair i.e. a sofa.
- DO** Sit in a firmer chair with your feet on the floor, and your bottom against the back of the chair.
- DON'T:** maintain any position for long periods especially sitting.
- DO** change position regularly. If possible don't sit for more than 20 minutes at a time
- DO:** Keep active and moving within your pain limits. Use an ice pack on your back for 10 mins if pain is sharp and severe or heat (hot water bottle) for 20 mins if your back is more stiff and achy.

Exercises

Exercises are recommended by the NICE guidelines as effective ways to alleviate back pain and related symptoms.

There are many exercises that following a full assessment may be appropriate for you and your specific problem but the following exercises are a good starting point and may help alleviate your symptoms without seeking further advice or treatment.

Only do the exercises within your pain limits. DO NOT force any exercise.

Lumbar spine rotation

Lying on your back with your knees bent and feet on the floor or bed. Keep knees and ankle together.

Gently rock your knees from side to side. Go as far as you can within the limits of your pain. Keep movement relaxed and rhythmical.

Repeat 10 –15 times each way.

Pelvic Tilting

Roll your pelvis backwards flattening your lower back on the bed (as if you are going to lift your bottom of the bed, but don't go that far) then roll your pelvis forwards so your lower back arches and moves away from the bed. Keep the movement relaxed and rhythmically like being on a waterbed.

Repeat 10 –15 times each direction.

The above exercises should be done regularly whether your pain is chronic or acute. For chronic conditions you should do them twice a day and increase to 4 times per day for acute conditions.

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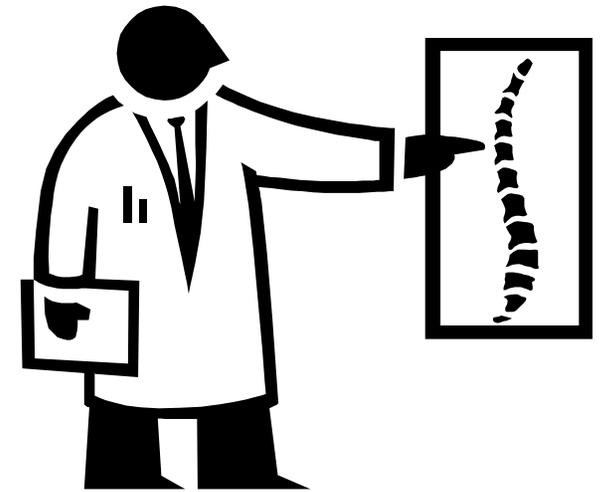
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Advice for Back Pain



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