

Your Guide to Back Pain

Physiotherapy Community & Therapy Services

This leaflet has been designed to give you important information about your condition / procedure, and to answer some common queries that you may have.



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Introduction

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Back Pain – The Facts

Back pain is very common.

Back pain can be painful and uncomfortable, but is **not** usually serious.

Back pain can affect anyone, but is more common in people between 35 and 55 years of age.

Back pain responds best to what you can do to help yourself.

Do I need a MRI Scan or X-ray?

A scan or x-ray can detect serious spinal injuries, but they don't usually help in the majority of cases and can be quite misleading. What you do about back pain yourself is usually more important than getting an exact diagnosis.

Very few people with back pain have a disc or trapped nerve problem and even then, it usually gets better itself. Very few back problems require surgery.

Doctors sometimes mention words like 'degeneration' which seems worrying, but this basically means the normal wear and tear changes that occur with age – a bit like grey hair.

Causes of Back Pain

The spine is a strong structure, made up of solid bony blocks that are joined by discs and strengthened and supported by strong ligaments and a corset of muscles.

Most back pain is linked to how these structures work together in a mechanical and postural way – problems can occur when one or more of the components are not performing their role correctly.

Remember

Back pain is common and is rarely due to any serious disease, but there are a few warning signs to look out for:

- Severe pain that gets worse over several weeks instead of improving
- If you are unwell with your back pain
- Difficulty in controlling your bladder or bowel motions
- Numbness around your back passage or genitals
- Numbness, pins and needles or weakness in both legs
- Unsteadiness on your feet

In these circumstances you should see your doctor and make him aware of your symptoms.

What you can do

Stay active, although discomfort and stiffness can make this difficult at first, maintaining and gradually increasing your daily activities can help your back and speed up your recovery. Staying active will help because it:

- Develops your muscles and keeps you supple
- Strengthens your bones
- Gets you fitter
- Improves your mood and makes you feel more positive



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- Releases natural, pain reducing chemicals

Bed rest is not helpful for the spine and in the long term can:

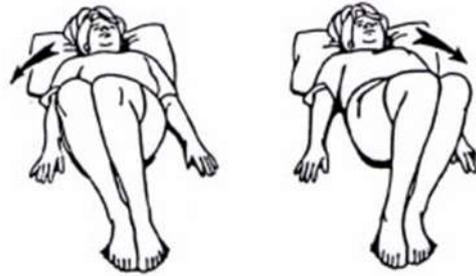
- Allow the muscles and joints to stiffen up
- Allow muscles and bones to weaken
- Decrease your fitness levels
- Lower your mood and increase your pain and discomfort
- Make it harder and harder to get going again

Take regular medication by speaking to your GP or pharmacist about medication that is appropriate for you.

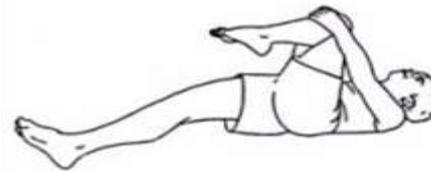
Heat and cold, can be used for relief of pain and muscle tension. Try a cold pack in the early stages to relieve soreness or alternatively heat – a warm bath / shower or the use of wheat bags or hot water bottles. (When applying heat or cold directly to an area of the body, always use a towel as a barrier to prevent the risk of a skin burn).

Change lifestyle factors, Check for everyday factors that may be aggravating things. Avoid stress, uncomfortable or repetitive postures at work, at home or while driving or long periods sitting and standing.

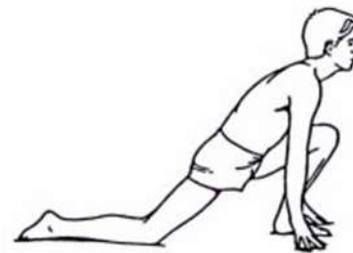
Safe and Gentle Exercises – the Following gentle exercises can help ease lower back pain and stiffness. They should be performed slowly and gently several times a day when you are in a relaxed state of mind.



Slowly rotate knees gently from side to side within your pain-free range. Repeat 10 times several times a day.



Slowly bring your knee up towards your chest, helping with your hands till you feel a gentle stretch. Hold the position for 5 seconds and repeat 10 times each leg.



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Crouch down and kneel on one leg, then gently lean forward from the waist. Hold the stretch for 20 seconds, relax and repeat 3 times each leg.



Gently arch the back by slowly raising up with your arms, keeping your lower half in contact with the floor and your lower back relaxed. Repeat 10 times.

Good Postures for the Lower Back

Static positions, like sitting puts a lot of stress and fatigue on the muscles and structures of your back.



By adopting good postures and regularly changing your positions when in the home, the work place or during normal activities, you can greatly reduce or prevent these stresses from becoming a problem.

What can we do?

Choice of treatment, As well as acting on advice and information from a health professional, keeping active and using medication appropriately, your GP or other healthcare professional can advise you on a choice of treatments. The methods of

treatment listed below have been shown to help people manage their low back pain:

- A back management programme, usually in a group setting
- A course of manual therapy and home exercises.
- A course of acupuncture

Remember

There is no quick fix for back pain – so be realistic about what you expect from a doctor or therapist.

The important thing is for you to take control and get on with your life don't let fear and worry hold back your recovery. You need to maintain the momentum of your life, which includes keeping active and staying at work if you possibly can.

Most of all stay positive and make small steps forward towards your recovery and future goals.

Contact details within the Trust for patients to obtain additional information

Physiotherapy Department at Scunthorpe on 01724 290010

Physiotherapy Department at Grimsby on 01472 875276

Physiotherapy Department at Goole on 01405 290019

Concerns and Queries

If you have any concerns / queries about any of the services offered by the Trust, in the first instance, please speak to the person providing your care.



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For Diana, Princess of Wales Hospital

Alternatively you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (01472) 875403 or at the PALS office which is situated near the main entrance.

For Scunthorpe General Hospital

Alternatively you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (01724) 290132 or at the PALS office which is situated on C Floor.

Alternatively you can email:
nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Confidentiality

Information on NHS patients is collected in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons (e.g. providing care and treatment, managing and planning the NHS, training and educating staff, research etc.).

Everyone working for the NHS has a legal duty to keep information about you confidential. Information will only ever be shared with people who have a genuine need for it (e.g. your GP or other professionals from whom you have been receiving care) or if the law requires it, for example, to notify a birth.

Please be assured however that anyone who receives information from us is also under a legal duty to keep it confidential.

Zero Tolerance - Violent, Threatening and Abusive Behaviour

The Trust and its staff are committed to providing high quality care to patients within the department. However, we wish to advise all patients / visitors that the following inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated:

- Swearing

- Threatening / abusive behaviour
- Verbal / physical abuse

The Trust reserves the right to withdraw from treating patients whom are threatening / abusive / violent and ensuring the removal of those persons from the premises.

All acts of criminal violence and aggression will be notified to the Police immediately.

Risk Management Strategy

The Trust welcomes comments and suggestions from patients and visitors that could help to reduce risk.

Perhaps you have experienced something whilst in hospital, whilst attending as an outpatient or as a visitor and you felt at risk.

Please tell a member of staff on the ward or in the department you are attending / visiting.

Moving & Handling

The Trust operates a Minimal Lifting Policy, which in essence means patients are only ever lifted by nursing staff in an emergency situation.

Patients are always encouraged to help themselves as much as possible when mobilising, and if unable to do so, equipment may be used to assist in their safe transfer.

If you have any questions regarding moving and handling of patients within the Trust, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department you are visiting.



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**Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS
Foundation Trust**

**Diana Princess of Wales Hospital
Scartho Road
Grimsby
01472 874111**

**Scunthorpe General Hospital
Cliff Gardens
Scunthorpe
01724 282282**

**Goole & District Hospital
Woodland Avenue
Goole
01405 720720**

www.nlg.nhs.uk

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