

Physiotherapy: Lifestyle Management

Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Community & Therapy Services

This leaflet has been designed to act as a reminder of the lifestyle changes you can make as discussed within the Back group sessions here at Scunthorpe General Hospital and who you can contact with any questions.



Information for patients and visitors

Introduction

To help maintain a healthy spine, manage your condition and help prevent further flare ups of your symptoms it is important that you make changes to certain lifestyle activities. This leaflet is a list of possible changes that you can make to help achieve this. Not all will be suitable for your particular situation, but select the most relevant to you. Try to stick to your plan and make these lifestyle changes part of your daily routine.

Lifestyle Management Strategies

Below is a list of things you should do:

- When vacuuming, sweeping, raking change hands regularly
- When Ironing place your foot on phone book or small step to achieve a more upright posture
- Sleep on a medium firm or firm mattress, this is usually the best option for most people
- Change your position and activity every half hour or so
- Put shoes and socks on after getting going and warming up
- When using a dog lead extend it and wrap around your waist
- Think and plan before attempting lifting, long journeys – is it necessary?
- Stop and move every hour when driving
- Use suitcases with wheels
- Have several jobs going at once – so you can alternate between them
- When things are difficult – do things in smaller doses but stay active

Below is a list of things you should not do:

- Do not sit sideways on the sofa or with feet up behind (this will prevent excessive stress on the spine)
- Do not spend the night sleeping in a chair (this will avoid prolonged postures with the spine in flexion)
- Do not carry lots of bags of shopping – use the trolley
- Do not lift / move large pot plants or other awkward objects
- Don't bend and lift small children – let them climb onto objects, where safe
- Avoid moving bits of furniture with your hips and thighs – do not bend and push / pull heavy items



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- Avoid bending / reaching into small spaces or reaching too far or too high (keep regularly used items where they can be easily reached)
- Gardening, avoid sustained bending and put garden waste in smaller more manageable bags

Lifestyle Management – Aids and Gadgets That Can Help

- Lumbar Belts and supports do not weaken you, use these to get through stressful activities
- Walking sticks / Hiking poles can help to take some stress off the spine
- Lumbar rolls and back supports for all sitting and driving positions
- Night rolls, bolsters, pillows and cushions for comfort
- A chair that is set up for **YOU** at home and work
- Mattress toppers – take on holiday if you are used to one at home
- Gym / Swiss ball for sitting on and for gentle exercises
- Mini stepper, static cycle also for gentle exercise and a return to activity
- Wobble cushions and wobble boards to sit on and exercise the core muscles
- Shock absorbing insoles to relieve weight bearing when walking

Lifestyle Management – Flare up Strategies

Have a first aid plan:

- Relative rest initially
- Timely use of pain relief with analgesics
- Use of heat and / or cold, whichever works best for you to relieve your spasm and symptoms (always apply heat or cold cautiously and wrap in a towel or similar to protect your skin)
- Relaxation strategies and relaxed breathing can help ease pain and relax muscles
- Re-plan your day(s) to suit your present circumstances
- Start to move away from painful area
- Pace your daily activities into smaller more manageable chunks
- Ease into gentle regular activity
- Think and act positively

On bad days stay active – hard to do but gently persevere



Information for patients and visitors

Contact details for Further Information

Musculoskeletal Team, Physiotherapy Department, Scunthorpe General Hospital 03033 302385

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service offers confidential advice, support and information on any health related matters.

If you have a comment, concern, complaint or compliment about the care or service you have received from the Trust you can contact the PALS team as follows:

Telephone: 03033 306518

Email: nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net

There are also offices at both the Diana Princess of Wales Hospital (near the main entrance) and Scunthorpe General Hospital (on the C Floor, near the outpatient department), should you wish to visit.

Please note: PALS should not be contacted for clinical advice relating to the content of this leaflet. The service should be contacted directly in the first instance.

Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust

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