

PATIENT INFORMATION

BACK PAIN

AED

Back Pain

Lower Back Pain and Sciatica

Back pain is managed by a general approach, this will help you and your back for many years.

Most back pain is due to a muscular strain or an increase in the tension of the muscles.

Back pain is experienced by 80% of the population in their lifetime.

The spine

The bones of the back are arranged in a column called vertebra. The vertebra next to each other form your facet joint.

In between each vertebra is a padded disc. The spinal cord goes through the middle of the vertebra. Nerves come off the spinal cord to supply sensation and movement to the body. Sometimes these nerves can become "pinched" causing the pain called sciatica.



Why do we get back pain? How is it managed?

Your Health

Sleep

Emotional

Fitness

Smoking

Injury

Posture

Muscle strength

Diet & Fluids

Your Body

Injury

Many people bend over and suddenly experience severe back pain. It is most likely the muscles have suddenly stretched and pulled to accommodate this.

Muscles that are tense or working hard also cause pain.

Twisting, over stretching can cause pain, sometimes sitting for long periods causes muscles to ache.

Posture & Flexibility

The spine has natural curves at the shoulder and the waist. It is most stable when we are standing. When we bend and twist there are no hinges-it squashes together.

Consider what strain you put your back under from suddenly bending to pick keys up, or shower gel, or children's or animal's toys etc.

Protect your back!

Suddenly bending places, a great strain on the spine.

Keep moving-little and often.

Try not to strain and overload the spine.

Everyone's flexibility is different-maintain flexibility for your lifestyle.



Muscle strength

The muscles of the body support the back-our back helps us function, stand, and move.

Strong muscles in the body will help support the back-not just back muscles-strength to the front (your core muscles) arms and legs are also needed.

Your back is a large structure and needs a lot of support-managing the weight of the upper body is what your back does.

Your Health

General health is important for back pain. Poor fitness and low levels of physical activity are not good for your general health or your back.

Your Body

The bones in the lower back carry the weight of the torso, any extra weight in the upper body or abdomen is loaded onto the back.



Diet & Fluids

Bones need a healthy diet too.

Chronic inflammation in the back can be a problem with a poor diet.

A Mediterranean diet is recommended.

[www.heartuk.org.uk>the-mediterranean-diet](http://www.heartuk.org.uk/the-mediterranean-diet)

[www.nhs.uk>eat-well>eight-tips-for-healthy-eating](http://www.nhs.uk/eat-well/eight-tips-for-healthy-eating)

Sleep

Sleep is very important in keeping you well, healthy, and happy!

Less sleep means managing pain is more difficult



Smoking

Smoking is bad for your bones and muscles as well as your general health.

Stopping when you are managing a bad back would be very hard.

When /if you are ready:

[www.nhs.uk>better-health>quit-smoking](http://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking)

Emotional



Your back is part of you!

Stress and anxiety in life can contribute to the pain in your back, and how you manage it.

Back pain can be very distressing and "take over" as it affects many parts of your life.

Fitness and exercise

This is important to help with posture and the position of your back. Strength in your abdomen -your core strength-helps the back-a strong front is a strong back.

Your back has long muscles that come from your shoulders-exercising your shoulders /arms can help your back.

ANY exercise is beneficial -it pumps blood around the body, helps muscles work and strengthen, and helps with core strength and posture.

Little and often is good way to think about exercise for the back.

Supporting measures

Some people find shaped pillows/
heat patches/ice patches helpful

Attitudes and Beliefs

What pain you have experienced in the past affects how you manage pain in the future. Understanding this can be hard, but helpful. Managing back pain for a long time is very hard, this advice could help.

Medicines

These help in combination with other measures.

Paracetamol 1 gram (two tablets) 4 times a day, maximum eight in 24 hours.

Codeine phosphate 30-60 mgs 4 time a day.

Ibuprofen 400mgs 3 times a day.

Ibuprofen gel 5 % -3 times a day.

Gabapentin 100mgs 3 times a day.

-your medical team will advise you on what medicines to take.

Constipation can be a side affect of strong pain killers and less movement. Please eat and drink well and contact your pharmacist if needed. When going to the toilet- putting your feet on a small stool may help.

X-rays and MRI scans

X-rays are usually only taken if you are suspected of having a bone fracture.

MRI scans give a detailed picture of the spine. For most people with low back pain MRI scans do not highlight or reflect the cause of the pain.

It is very common to see age related changes to the back in people with and without back pain. Most often there is no change to how the back pain is managed after a scan.

In the Emergency Department MRI scans are undertaken if you have red flag signs, these are signs of serious illness.

For other patients it is more important that we ask you questions, examine you and give you good advice

Surgery and Procedures

These are usually recommended for medical reasons for pain. For further information:

www.nhs.uk>conditions>back-pain

Serious spinal problems

Red Flag symptoms- seek medical advice if you have severe back pain

and:

Are not being able to have a wee (pass urine)

Incontinence of urine/ faeces

You have numbness around your genitals or your bottom

You have lost feeling in both of your legs, or have pins and needles or pain in both legs

You have a history of cancer

You have lost a lot of weight with no explanation

You have a temperature or are unwell

Back pain Hurts! It Can be Severe!

It stops you moving/working/caring for yourself and family/doing your daily activities.

Please consider all the information -back pain is managed by a combination of ALL these measures, now and in the future.

Further information from the NHS-exercises for back pain:

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/muscle-bone-and-joints/exercises/exercises-for-back-pain>

Some exercises are included, any exercise can help.

Stretching exercises

1



Back stretch (stretches back muscles) Lie on your back, hands above your head. Bend your knees and, keeping your feet on the floor, roll your knees to one side, slowly. Stay on one side for 10 seconds. Repeat three times each side. Note: Upper knee should be directly above lower knee.

2



Deep lunge (stretches muscles in front of thigh and abdomen) Kneel on one knee, the other foot in front. Lift your back knee up making sure you keep looking forwards. Hold for five seconds and repeat three times each side.

3



One-leg stand - front (stretches front thigh) Steady yourself with one hand on a wall or work surface for support. Bend one leg up behind you. Hold your foot for 10 seconds and repeat three times each side.

4



One-leg stand - back (stretches hamstrings) Steady yourself, then put one leg up on a chair. Keeping your raised leg straight, bend the supporting knee forward to stretch your hamstrings. Repeat three times each side. Please note: For those with acute sciatica this hamstring stretch may also pull on the sciatic nerve, making it feel worse. If in doubt, ask a physiotherapist if this exercise is suitable for you.

5



Knee to chest (stretches muscles of bottom - gluteals) Lie on your back. Bring one knee up and pull it gently into your chest for five seconds. Repeat for up to five times each side.

**Strength
and stabilising
exercises**



1 Pelvic tilt (works the deep muscles around the pelvis)

Lie down with your knees bent. Tighten your stomach muscles, flattening your back against the floor. Hold for five seconds. Repeat five times.



2 Stomach tone (works the transverse tummy muscles)

Lie on your front with your arms by your side, head on one side. Pull in your stomach muscles, centred around your belly button. Hold for five seconds. Repeat three times. Build up to 10 seconds and repeat during the day, while walking or standing. Keep breathing during this exercise!



3 Buttock tone (works the gluteals)

Lie on your front and bend one leg up behind you. Lift your bent knee just off the floor. Hold for up to eight seconds. Repeat five times each side.



4 Deep stomach muscle tone (stabilises lower back)

Kneel on all fours with a small curve in your lower back. Let your stomach relax completely. Pull the lower part of your stomach upwards so that you lift your back (without arching it) away from the floor. Hold for 10 seconds. Keep breathing! Repeat 10 times.



5 Back stabiliser

Kneel on all fours with your back straight. Tighten your stomach. Keeping your back in this position, raise one arm in front of you and hold for 10 seconds. Try to keep your pelvis level and don't rotate your body. Repeat 10 times each side. To progress, try lifting one leg behind you instead of your arm.

During your contact with us, it is important that you are happy with your care and treatment. Please speak to a member of staff and/or the ward/department Sister/Charge Nurse if you have questions or concerns.

MATRON

A Matron is also available during the hours of 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. During these periods, ward/department staff can contact Matron to arrange to meet with you. Out of hours, a Senior Nurse can be contacted via the ward/department to deal with any concerns you may have.

INFECTION CONTROL REQUEST

Preventing infections is a crucial part of our patients' care. To ensure that our standards remain high our staff have regular infection prevention and control training and their practice is monitored in the workplace. We ask patients and visitors to assist us in preventing infections by cleaning their hands at regular intervals and informing staff of areas within the hospital that appear soiled.

As a patient there may be times that you are unsure whether a staff member has cleaned their hands; if in doubt please ask the staff member and they will be only too happy to put your mind at ease by cleaning their hands so that you can see them.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

ANY CONDITION SPECIFIC DANGER SIGNALS TO LOOK OUT FOR:

CONTACT INFORMATION IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR CONDITION

- Your own GP

OTHER USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS/CONTACTS:

NHS 111

Stop Smoking Helpline (Sefton) – 0300 100 1000

Stop Smoking Helpline (West Lancashire) – 0800 328 6297

**Please call 01704 704714 if you need
this leaflet in an alternative format**

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We would welcome your feedback about your experience
at Southport and Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust.
Please access the Friends and Family Test at the following
link:

[https://www.southportandormskirk.nhs.uk/patients-and-
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Thank you

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