

# **PATIENT INFORMATION**

## **Back Pain**

**Advice & Information**



## **WHAT CAUSES BACK PAIN?**

It has been suggested that 80% of the population will experience some sort of lower back pain (LBP) during their lifetime. Back pain can be the result of a range of conditions but most back pain is not due to 1 specific cause but a range of factors. Pain does not necessarily mean there is a serious condition.

## **HOW CAN I HELP MYSELF?**

Follow the 7 Golden Rules of back pain:

<https://www.sthelenccg.nhs.uk/your-health/back-pain-help/>

1. Keep moving, even if slowly at first
2. Keep living and working normally
3. Avoid bed rest during the day
4. Exercise
5. Don't sit down for too long
6. Don't be afraid to take simple painkillers
7. Stay active and remember to re-introduce activities like heavy lifting gradually

## **WHEN TO SEEK URGENT MEDICAL ATTENTION**

Attend A&E if you are experiencing any of the following ***new symptoms since the onset*** of your back pain:

- Difficulty passing or controlling urine
- Numbness around the back passage or genitals
- Numbness, pins and needles or weakness in both legs at the same time
- Unexplained unsteadiness on your feet

## **HOW CAN PHYSIOTHERAPY HELP?**

NICE guidelines support the use of physiotherapy treatments for back pain. Your therapist may offer exercise, advice and manual therapy. This may be as part of an individual or group exercise session. This will enable you to manage your symptoms, contribute to your own recovery, teach self-management strategies and reduce the likelihood of pain recurring. Recently, acupuncture and the use of a TENS machine have been found to be ineffective in the management of LBP so these treatments are no longer offered.

## **I HURT MY BACK, SO WILL I HAVE BACK PAIN IN THE FUTURE?**

Although lower back pain can be very painful, for the majority of people recovery is very good. Recent research has shown that 80% of people who experience lower back pain for the first time; symptoms will resolve in 12 weeks. It is very common for people who have had LBP to have occasional further episodes of symptoms in their lifetime, but these are rarely incapacitating. Only a small percentage of people develop ongoing and disabling pain. Educating patients during their first experience of LBP can reduce pain and the risk of it recurring.

## **IF I AM IN PAIN, IS MY SPINE DAMAGED?**

There is poor correlation between pain and damage. Two people with similar presentations of back pain can experience very different levels of pain. The volume of pain felt can vary according to a variety of factors, including fitness, mood, previous experience of pain, the situation in which pain occurred, fears and coping styles. Often when

someone has LBP, the nerves involved in sending and processing pain are more active compared to other people. This means you can get pain with activities that previously did not hurt, even though you are not damaging your spine. The good news is these nerves can become less active and in doing so lessen the pain experience. A number of strategies can help with this including graded exercise, pacing activities, improving stress management and sleep.

## **DO I NEED AN X-RAY OR SCAN TO DIAGNOSE MY BACK PAIN?**

In the majority of cases, scans or x-rays are not needed to diagnose your back pain. Only a small proportion of people will benefit from an MRI scan to aid in their management. Recent studies have shown that even people with no LBP will have evidence of normal “wear and tear” changes on x-rays and scans. A clinical examination is usually sufficient to identify the small proportion of people for whom scans are indicated.

## **WHAT IS THE BEST EXERCISE FOR LOWER BACK PAIN?**

Research has demonstrated that exercise has a positive effect on LBP. There has yet to be a research trial to prove that one form of exercise is superior to another. Exercise that is enjoyable and easy to do is probably the best exercise as it is more likely to get done. Positive effects of exercise are not solely associated with improved fitness and conditioning, chemicals called endorphins are released from the brain when we exercise and have pain killing effects.

**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 any questions or concerns.**

## **MATRON**

A Matron is also available during the hours of 9.00 to 5.00 pm 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 your GP or Accident & Emergency Department if you experience any of the following new symptoms:

Difficulty passing or controlling urine

Numbness around the back passage or genitals

Numbness, pins and needles or weakness in both legs at the same time

Unexplained unsteadiness on your feet

### **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**

**Southport and Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust**

Ormskirk & District General Hospital  
Wigan Road, Ormskirk, L39 2AZ  
Tel: (01695) 577111

Southport & Formby District General Hospital  
Town Lane, Kew, Southport, PR8 6PN  
Tel: (01704) 547471

**FOR APPOINTMENTS**

Telephone (01695) 656680  
Email [soh-tr.appointments@nhs.net](mailto:soh-tr.appointments@nhs.net)

Please remember to complete the **attached Friends and Family Test**.

Alternatively, you can complete the *Friends and Family Test* on-line by going to:  
[southportandormskirk.nhs.uk/FFT](http://southportandormskirk.nhs.uk/FFT)  
**Thank you**

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