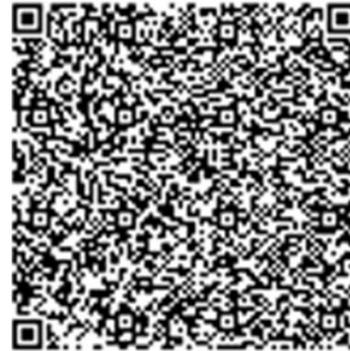


## Mechanical Lower Back Pain



Link to cauda equina warnings in  
alternative languages

<https://www.eoemskservice.nhs.uk/advice-and-leaflets/lower-back/cauda-equina>

Whiston Hospital  
Warrington Road  
Prescot, Merseyside, L35 5DR  
0151 426 1600

Southport & Formby Hospital  
Town Lane, Kew,  
Southport, Merseyside,  
PR8 6PN  
Telephone: 01704 547 471

If you need this leaflet in a different language or accessible format please speak to a member of staff who can arrange it for you.

اگر به این بروشور به زبان دیگر یا در قالب دسترس پذیر نیاز دارید، لطفاً با یکی از کارکنان صحبت کنید تا آن را برای شما تهیه کند.

Jeśli niniejsza ulotka ma być dostępna w innym języku lub formie, proszę skontaktować się z członkiem personelu, który ją dla Państwa przygotowuje.

Dacă aveți nevoie de această broșură într-o altă limbă sau într-un format accesibil, vă rog să discutați cu un membru al personalului să se ocupe de acest lucru pentru dumneavoastră

如果您需要本传单的其他语言版本或无障碍格式，请联系工作人员为您安排。

إذا احتجت إلى هذه النشرة بلغة أخرى، أو بتنسيق يسهل الوصول إليه، يرجى التحدث إلى أحد الموظفين لترتيب ذلك لك.

- If you require further advice, please contact your GP or phone 111.
- Cauda Equina Syndrome Symptoms.
- Any combination seek help immediately (return to the Emergency Department).
- Loss of feeling/pins and needles between your inner thighs or genitals.
- Numbness in or around your back passage or buttocks.
- Altered feeling when using toilet paper to wipe yourself.
- Increasing difficulty when you try to urinate.
- Increasing difficulty when you try to stop or control your flow of urine.
- Loss of sensation when you pass urine.
- Leaking urine or recent need to use pad.
- Not knowing when your bladder is either full or empty.
- Inability to stop a bowel movement or leaking.
- Loss of sensation when you pass a bowel motion.
- Change in ability to achieve an erection or ejaculate.
- Loss of sensation in genitals during sexual intercourse.

## General information

You have been assessed in the emergency department regarding back pain and it was felt that it is fine for you to be discharged home. Contained in this leaflet is some useful information regarding back pain.

### Introduction

Back pain is a common problem affecting 4 out of 5 of us at some point in our life. Pain can sometimes be severe but is often not caused by a serious problem.

### What causes back pain?

In most cases of back pain the cause is unclear, though it is often caused by a simple soft tissue (muscle, tendon, ligament) strain. It can also be as a result of, for example, poor posture or lack of exercise resulting in stiffness of the spine and weakness of the muscles.

### Things you can do to help yourself

Back pain will usually settle down within a few days or weeks however, to help your back pain to settle down there are a number of things you can do to help yourself.

Exercise regularly. This may be simple exercise such as walking.

Try to keep mobile. When awake only sit or lie for 30 minutes before getting up and walking around.

## Pain killers

Pain killers will help control the pain in the short term and often prevent the pain becoming persistent in nature.

- We recommend taking paracetamol regularly 4 times a day and ibuprofen 3 times a day. Please note that ibuprofen should not be taken if you suffer with kidney problems, asthma, stomach ulcers / reflux, heart failure or are pregnant.
- If you are prescribed co-codamol please note the following: it contains paracetamol so do not take other paracetamol based products, it contains codeine that can cause constipation and can impair your ability to drive.
- Only take these medications for a week before being reviewed by your GP as by this point your pain should be settling.

### Cold or heat

This is personal preference.

In the acute phase of an injury (first 48 hours) ice can be a good pain killer. Place an ice pack over the lower back (within a tea towel) and apply for 5-10 minutes and repeat as often as you like.

Heat is often better for ongoing back problems e.g. arthritis. This is why hot weather can alleviate aches and pains.

## Other important hints

Lose weight. Every kilogram you are overweight puts extra strain on your back.

Once the pain has settled consider starting exercises to increase your core strength.

Lift things carefully. Bend at the knees and not at the back.

If your symptoms are not settling after a week or two then you should self-refer to a physiotherapist.

### When to return to the emergency department

Very rarely (1 in 100,000 cases) back pain can be a sign of a serious problem.

Many patients have a combination of back pain, leg pain, leg numbness and weakness. These symptoms can be distressing for you but do not necessarily require emergency medical attention.

A rare but serious back condition, Cauda Equina Syndrome, can lead to permanent damage or disability and will need to be seen by an Emergency Specialist Spinal Team.

See overleaf for symptoms of cauda equina syndrome.

If you develop very severe ongoing back pain that gets worse over several weeks you should either book an urgent appointment with your GP or return to the emergency department.