

Low Back Pain

Back pain is very common and is generally not caused by a serious illness or condition. It often improves with time.

Causes of back pain

- Common causes of back pain include:
- Muscle strain
- Joint pain
- Irritation of the nerves in your back for example by a herniated disc
- Arthritis of the spine (also called Spondylosis)

The majority of back pain is not due to any serious pathology. However, if you develop any of the following symptoms attend A+E immediately:

- Pain, tingling, weakness or numbness in both legs and or feet
- Numbness or tingling around your genitals or buttocks
- Reduced bladder or bowel control (wetting or pooing yourself)
- Difficulty when trying to pass urine
- Loss of sensation in your genitals during sexual intercourse
- A change in your ability to get or maintain an erection

Treatment

There are a number of things you can do to help manage your pain and speed up your recovery:

- **Keep moving:** Our backs are designed to move and avoiding movement can make things worse. Try to stay active and continue with your daily activities
- **Take pain relief:** Try taking an anti-inflammatory pain medication like ibuprofen
- **Apply ice or heat to the area:** try using an ice pack wrapped in a damp towel or alternatively place a warm water bottle (in a cover) on the painful area. Use either of these regularly for up to 20 minutes each time. Do not use ice or heat if you have any loss of skin sensation or damage to your skin.
- **Carry out exercises or stretches for your back pain:** you will find some suggestions at the end of this leaflet
- **Avoid resting in bed for long periods of time** and not moving your back

Sleeping

Sleep in whichever position is comfortable for you - try lying on your side with a pillow between your knees or lying on your front with a pillow propped underneath your hips.

Driving

Take regular breaks on long journeys. During a break, walk and move your back. Gentle neck and shoulder movements may also help ease tense muscles and stiff joints.

Fitness and Activity

Physically fit people generally get less back pain and tend to recover faster. Swimming, cycling or short walks are good ways of keeping up your fitness, even while you still have back pain.

If your pain levels are high, build up your activities slowly, as your symptoms allow.

In the Office

Change position regularly and break up your day with regular movement. Some ideas you could try are holding a walking meeting or using a standing desk where available.

Manual Work, Gardening and Housework

You may find that you need to pace yourself, take regular breaks and modify your activity early on but try to get back to normal as soon as possible and as your back pain begins to settle.

Exercises

Your back is designed for movement. The sooner you get back to normal activity, the sooner your back will feel better. Here are some exercises to help you do this. Start by completing the exercises below two or three times a day.

If any of these exercises make your symptoms worse then reduce the frequency or stop them and consult your doctor. If after four to six weeks your backache is not improving, go back and see your doctor. A delay in recovery rarely means that it is a serious problem, it's more likely that you may need some extra support to help you manage your back pain.



Lay on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. Rotate your knees sideways while keeping them together. The rotation must come from your hips/pelvis and lower back.

Rotate your arms toward the opposite side with your lower arm stretched and the other arm on your chest.

Switch sides every time.

Reps: 10 **Frequency:** Twice daily



Start on all fours with hands underneath the shoulders. Lift the head and chest simultaneously while letting the stomach sink and the lower back arch to perform the cat.

Round the back and let the head and neck drop while trying to get the head and pelvis as close as possible.

Do not force the end range of motion.

Reps: 10 **Frequency:** Twice daily



Lie on your back with your legs straight. Bend one knee and bring it to your chest, holding it with your hands.

Hold for 5 seconds. Repeat.

Reps: 10 **Frequency:** Twice daily

Lie on your back with your knees bent. Tuck your tailbone under and roll into bridge lifting your hips off the ground until your trunk is aligned with your legs.

Slowly return to the initial position and repeat.

Reps: 3 sets of 8 **Frequency:** Three times per week



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