



Back Pain Advice

Back Pain Facts

Most back pain is not due to serious disease. It usually settles within a few days or weeks without treatment.

If your back pain does not settle or begin to improve in this time, or if your back pain settles and then recurs you should seek further advice from your GP. You may require further investigation (i.e. x-ray or MRI scan) or referral to a physiotherapist.

You should go to your GP promptly or an A&E department if you have any of the following:

- Severe / worsening / constant pain
- Feeling generally unwell
- Unexplained weight loss
- Difficulty controlling / lack of awareness of your bladder or bowels
- Numbness around back passage / genitals
- Numbness / altered sensation in both legs
- Unsteadiness when standing / walking
- Weakness in one / both legs
- Pain at night which is much worse than during the day

Pain Relief

Pain relief (e.g. paracetamol, Ibuprofen) is best taken regularly as per the instructions on the pack.

This helps avoid increasing pain levels which can be difficult to control in between doses.

Heat and Ice

Ice is best used in the first 48 hours after injury to reduce swelling. Heat can then be used afterwards to reduce pain. Both heat and ice can be used for 10-15 minute periods and should be used carefully, checking the skin regularly.

Ice – use a pack of ice / frozen peas wrapped in a damp tea towel so that the ice does not directly touch the skin.

Heat – use a hot water bottle wrapped in a towel.

Posture

Sitting and standing with good posture will help ease your back pain:

- Keep your back straight and avoid slouching when sitting and standing
- Some people find using a small towel folded and placed in the base of the back beneficial when they are sitting in a chair.

Sleep

Sleep in your most comfortable position, unless your doctor has advised otherwise.

- However you sleep, try to keep your spine straight
- Try placing pillows in different areas and adjusting the type of pillow you use or even the mattress you have.

Exercise / Movement

- Aim to keep mobile by walking short distances regularly.
- Long periods of sitting, standing or walking are more likely to aggravate your back

Lifestyle / Work

- Return to normal exercise and activity as soon as you are able.
- Aim to progress things slowly at first, or to seek medical advice if you are unsure of anything.

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