



What is it?

Back pain is usually felt in your back and/or your buttock area, sometimes it can refer pain down your leg, and you may experience some pins and needles and/or numbness. Back pain is very common, and is rarely due to anything serious – even if the pain is very bad. Most people will experience back pain during their life. Most episodes of back pain will settle within 6 weeks this can be longer, especially if pain is felt into the leg.

How does it happen?

Sometimes a pain may develop immediately after you lift something heavy, or after an awkward twisting movement. Your posture can cause pain. Sometimes you may have pain with no specific cause.

What do you need to look out for?

It is important to inform your physiotherapist or doctor immediately if you suddenly develop the following:

- Difficulty passing or controlling urine
- Numbness or pins and needles of the back passage or genitals, or weakness of both legs
- Unsteadiness on feet
- Severe pain which gets worse rather than better, and/or you are unwell with back pain

What should you do?

Limit Bed Rest - Pain might force you to rest but lots of bed rest is not a good treatment for your back pain. Try to limit bed rest to 1-2 days as it can make you stiff, less fit and lower your mood. And these factors can make your pain worse.

- Stay as active as possible and return to normal activities as soon as possible. People with back pain who get active, and back to normal activities as soon as possible (including work) are likely to recover more quickly and are less likely to develop chronic (persistent) back pain compared to those who rest and do little exercise. You may have to put up with some pain whilst getting back to normal activities, but remember, pain with normal movement is not a sign of damage or harm.
- Manage Your Pain and Posture - Any medication that you take should be discussed with your GP or pharmacist. Paracetamol, Aspirin or Ibuprofen could be useful whilst you are getting back to normal activities. Try to maintain good posture. Use a rolled up towel in the small of your back when sitting or driving if this is comfortable, and try and avoid sitting for long periods.
- X-rays or scans of the back are often not helpful and do not show anything abnormal if you have simple low back pain. They may be advised if nerve root pain persists or is severe, or if another serious cause of the pain is suspected.
- Surgery and injections are only very rarely needed
- It is important with back pain not to worry too much. People, who keep positive and active, cope better and recover quicker!

Physical treatments provided by your physiotherapist, such as manipulation, may provide some short-term pain-relief. Treatment may vary, and the situation should be reviewed by a professional if the pain becomes worse, the symptoms change, or if significant pain persists beyond 4-6 weeks.

What will happen?

About 9 in 10 cases the pain has gone or has greatly eased within six weeks. However, once the pain has gone it is common to have further bouts of pain (recurrences) from time to time in the future. Also, it is common to have minor pains 'on and off' for quite some time after an initial bad bout of pain. In a small number of cases the pain persists for several months or longer (chronic back pain).

Can you prevent it?

Evidence suggests that the best way to prevent bouts of low back pain is simply to keep active, and to exercise regularly. This means general fitness exercise such as walking, running, swimming etc. It is also sensible to be 'back aware'. For example, do not lift objects when you are in an awkward twisting posture, keep objects close to your body when lifting, be aware of your sitting posture. Your physiotherapist can assist with exercise and advice specific for your problem.

Contact us now

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