Back Pain factsheet

Lower back pain

What should you do?

Lower back problems are extremely common with over 90% of the population having at least one back pain episode.
Lower back problems start for no obvious reason, which can be very frustrating. Many patients tell us they get ongoing or recurrent painful episodes but by keeping avctive it can reduce the frequency, duration and intensity of these episodes and leads to a more fulfilling life. Your back problem may cause aching, hot, burning, shooting, or stabbing pains in your back and sometimes into one or both of your legs. You may also get pins and needles.

Pain mechanisms are complex and can be influenced by many factors including emotions, environment and overall health.
Keeping active is very important when you have back pain.
Doing an activity may actually increase pain at first, but an increase in pain is very unlikley to mean you are causing any harm.

There are 7 golden rules to follow:

Keep moving, even if slowly at first

Keep living and working normally. This is important and is the best way to get better

However, the spine is strong so these symptoms are rarely due to any damage or serious condition. In fact despite advances in medicine we still cannot pinpoint the source of most back pain.

Don’t worry if your back still hurts at work, consider doing light tasks at first, speak to your manager about work concerns that you may have

Don’t sit down for too long, change positions regularly wherever you are

Avoid bed rest during the day

6. Stay active and remember to re-introduce activities like heavy lifting gradually
7. Exercise really helps your back and can relieve pain, start with light fitness training. Moving will make you stronger, keeping active is the best thing you can do.

Your ability to self-
your back pain s
improve with
6 week
of following this

What about pain relief?

What about work, hobbies and sport?

Can my back problem cause trouble anywhere else?

It is unlikely you will need x-rays or MRI scans

- Initially it may be helpful to use a covered icepack to ease your pain - never apply ice directly onto your skin.
- Alternatively heat can be soothing, so a covered hot water bottle may also be used. You should not use heat /ice for more than 15 minutes, three to four times a day Painkillers may help you keep moving, so
- Sensible use of painkillers such as paracetam
- Recovery is faster if you can stay at or get back to work as early as possible.
- Don't worry if your back still hurts; consider doing light tasks at first if this helps you get back to work easier and quicker.
- Stay active and remember to keep moving.
- Do normal activities as much as possible and use painkillers as needed.
- With regard to sports, start with light fitness training, and play when you

Sometimes when you get back pain you can also get pain in one or both legs (sciatica). This can cause pins and needles or a shooting, stabbing pain to the legs.
This can be very painful but this is common when you have back pain.

Do I need to see a doctor or a therapist ?

Not ussually - if you follow the right advice and take the right medication, your back problem should

If your back symptoms are still interfering with you ability to do normal things after 6 weeks, this is the time to seek further professional advice.
If you are registered with a Salford GP, you can now refer yourself to NHS physiotherapy at:

www.srft.nhs.uk/go2physio

ol, and ibuprofen will help, not harm your back.

- if you are already taking medication for something else or have other health problems, check with your local pharmacist before taking painkillers.
- Only take painkillers as instruct ed on the packet.

What should you watch out for?

feel ready.

improve over the next 6 weeks.

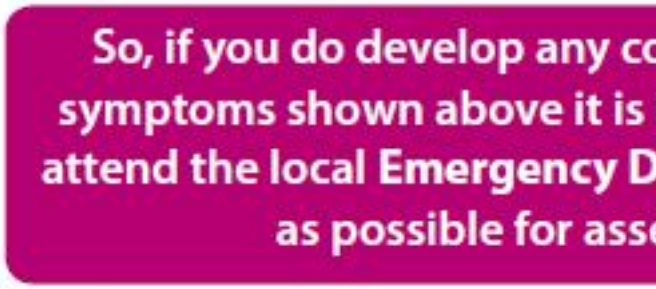
Cauda Equina Syndrome warning signs

If you experience any of the following in conjunction with your back pain, you need to see your GP as soon as possible:

- Generally feeling unwell.
- Back pain that starts when you have other problems, such as rheumatoid athritis or cancer.
- Numbness, pins and needles or weakness in one or both legs that has not improved after one week.
- Unsteadiness when you walk.
- Your back problem has not improved

Many patients have a combination of back pain, leg pain, leg numbness and weakness. Altough these symptoms can be distressing they do not necessarily require medical attention. There is a rare, but serious back condition, Caudia Equina Syndrome, which can lead to permanent damage or disability if not attended to quickly.

- 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 stop or control your flow of urine.
- Loss of sensation when you try to pass urine.

- Leaking urine or recent need to use pads.
- No knowing when your bladder is full or empty.
- Inability to stop a bowel movement or leaking.
- Loss of feeling when you pass a bowel motion.
- Change in abililty to achiev an erection or ejaculate.
- Loss of sensation in genitals during sexual intercourse.

within 6
weeks.