

What causes low back pain?

- Most back pain is not due to a serious condition.
- It can be caused by; bending and lifting incorrectly, prolonged posture and changes in activity.
- Stress and anxiety can also cause back pain.

What are the symptoms?

- Pain
- Reduced movement
- Stiffness
- Muscle Spasm

How long will it take to recover?

- Most low back pain gets better by itself, but there is good evidence that gentle activity speeds up recovery and prevents the pain from becoming persistent.
- The pain usually starts to settle within a few days.
- Your back likes movement so it is good to return to normal activities as soon as you are able to.
- The majority of simple strains do not cause lasting problems, as the body is very good at healing itself.

What treatments can I use?

Pain killers

- If your GP has prescribed pain killers, then these should be taken at the recommended dose.

Hot or Cold Packs

- Gentle heat (hot water bottle) can help reduce muscle spasm and pain. A cold pack (ice pack or frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel) can also provide short-term pain relief. Use whichever pack you find most helpful. Apply to the sore area for up to 15 minutes, every few hours.

Relaxation

- Learning to relax your muscles can be useful if your back pain is worsened by stress.

Massage

- Gentle soft tissue massage around the lower back may help relaxation and reduce pain.

Early Movement and Exercise

- Simple exercises can be performed to help restore the movement in your back, preventing stiffness.
- Getting stiff muscles and joints moving is often uncomfortable to start with but becomes much easier as you regain flexibility.

Exercises for your back

Lying on your back with your knees bent:

1. Tilt your pelvis forwards and backwards.



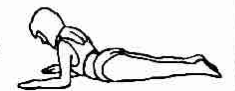
2. Bring your knees in towards your chest.



3. Gently roll your knees from side to side.



4. Lying on your front, rest on your forearms gently arching your back.



Exercise Illustrations: © PhysioTools Ltd

Please Note: These exercises should not increase your pain. Perform each exercise gently and slowly, only moving as far as feels comfortable. Practice each exercise up to 10 times, 2 or 3 times per day.

If your pain increases significantly stop the exercises and consult your GP or physiotherapist before continuing.

How can I improve my posture?

- Poor posture can often lead to back pain and stiffness.
- Ensure you take regular breaks from prolonged sitting or standing. Do not stay in one position for more than 20-30 minutes.
- You can use a rolled up towel in the arch of your lower back whilst sitting, to help support it.
- Ensuring your office/home work space is set-up correctly, can help reduce your back pain



General Advice

- Don't have prolonged bed rest, your back will get stiff and muscles will get weak, you may lose fitness and feel worse in the long run.
- Don't rely on painkillers alone, use gentle heat, relaxation and exercise to reduce pain.
- Do not rest for long periods at a time as this will lead to stiffness and weakness and prolong your recovery.

General Advice

- Keep active, maintain your normal daily activities, pacing them throughout the day as much as possible to avoid further flare ups.
- Keep your body healthy in the long run, with exercise.
- If your symptoms get worse, or do not improve please seek further medical advice.

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Low Back Pain Advice for Patients



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