

For pain in your lower back

Advice

Back pain is very common. When it has been going on for months or years the way your body deals with the symptoms can change. Normally back pain is **not** caused by damage to the spine, but rather overload of the soft tissue around the back. Back pain can often refer pain to the legs, however this is not normally caused by nerves being pinched, trapped or damaged.

What can I do to help?

Pain relief: Simple painkillers such as paracetamol (analgesics) and ibuprofen (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) can help. You should use them as advised, as and when you need them. Don't wait until your pain is severe before taking painkillers, as they're likely to work better if you manage your pain carefully. Don't use painkillers for more than 2 weeks without seeking medical advice. If you are currently taking any form of medication it is advisable to consult your GP or pharmacist before taking additional pain relief.

Posture: Try to maintain good posture when sitting at home, at work or in the car. Staying in awkward positions while working or driving will affect the soft tissues in your back and could increase your pain and delay your recovery.

Heat: Using a heat pack or hot water bottle against the area of pain in your back can help settle symptoms. Apply for up to 20 mins. Wrap in a tea-towel to prevent burns.

Exercise: Exercise is one of the most effective ways of treating back pain. Research shows that bed rest for more than a couple of days doesn't help back pain and in the long term actually makes it worse as the muscles in your back become weak. The following exercises are designed to increase the flexibility of your back and strengthen your core stability muscles.

Exercises to try:

Please try each one 2-10 times each hour. These exercises may aggravate your symptoms to some extent. This is perfectly normal and can be a sign that you are working effectively. However, if any start making your pain much worse then please stop those exercises immediately.

1. Extension facing a wall



Stand, leaning against a wall with your feet 30cm (1 foot) from the wall, as demonstrated in the picture. Push your stomach and pelvis towards the wall and hold for 5 seconds. Return to the start position and repeat 2-3 times each hour. (Note- if your stomach touches the wall, move your feet backwards a little for the next stretch.)

2. Knee to Chest



Lie on your back, with your knees bent and your feet on the floor. Gently bring one knee up towards your chest, assisting it with your hands towards the end of the movement. Hold for 5 seconds before slowly lowering again. Switch legs and repeat 2-3 times.

3. Knee Rolls



Lie on your back, with your knees bent and your feet on the floor. Gently roll your knees to one side, return to centre, and then roll your knees to the opposite side.