

For pain in the middle of your back

Advice

Acute thoracic pain is pain felt in the upper back (often between the shoulder blades) that lasts for a short time (i.e. less than three months). In most cases it is not possible to identify the cause of acute thoracic back pain. However, it is not necessary to have a specific diagnosis of the cause to manage the pain effectively. Generally pain will settle down with time and requires minimal treatment. It is rare for pain to be caused by a serious medical problem.

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 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, or 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 make recovery take longer. Try to limit sitting to 20 minutes without a break where possible.

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. Some discomfort is normal as you may be moving muscles which are tight or stiff. Please stop them if they aggravate your pain.

1. Extension over Chair



Sit on a chair with your arms folded across your chest. Now arch backwards over the back of the chair, raising your elbows up towards the ceiling as you do so. Hold for 2 seconds before returning to the start position and repeating

2. Thoracic Rotations



Sit with your arms crossed in front of you. Slowly rotate around to the right, keeping your hips facing forwards. Repeat to the other side.

To progress: Hold the back of your chair and gently pull yourself round a little further.

3. Thoracic Flexion/Extension in Kneeling



On all-fours.
Arch your back by tilting your pelvis and pulling your buttocks in.
Arch your back the other way by letting the small of your back fall toward the floor.
Please repeat gently up to 10 times

