



Acute Low Back Pain

What is low back pain?

Back pain is very common – four out of five of us will suffer one or more episodes of back pain at some point in our life.

Most back pain is not due to any serious disease or damage to the spine. Onset can be sudden which usually settles within a few days or weeks at the most.

What you do in the early stages is very important. The back is designed for movement and staying active will help you get better more quickly and prevent further back problems. If your pain isn't improving your GP can refer you to a Physiotherapist. In most cases it is not helpful to do any x-rays or scans.



Warning signs

If you have severe pain, which gets worse over several weeks, or if you are unwell for example have a fever, you should contact your doctor or call NHS 111. If you develop any of the symptoms below you should see your doctor/attend A&E immediately:

- Difficulty passing or controlling urine
- Loss of sensation or inability to stop a bowel movement
- Numbness around your back passage or genitals

These symptoms can be a sign of more serious problem which needs to be assessed urgently.

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Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust
Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust
www.wiltshirehealthandcare.nhs.uk

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Dealing with an episode of Back Pain

Pain Relief

- Simple pain killers can be used to help manage your pain. Ask your local pharmacist for advice. Please follow the instructions on the packet carefully.
- Your GP can prescribe stronger medication if required.
- You can apply cold or heat packs over the painful area for 10 minutes for short-term relief. Make sure you protect your skin from burns with a towel.

Keep Active

- Keeping active and maintaining your normal everyday activities will help you recover more quickly from back pain.
- Try to stay at work or return as soon as possible even if your back pain is still present. The longer you stay off work, the more you are at risk of developing long-term problems and it can become harder to return to work. If you feel your work is difficult or unsafe to do because of your pain, speak to your manager as you may be able to alter your role temporarily.
- Stay mobile to avoid becoming stiff and try to change position at least every 30 minutes.
- Walking and swimming are good forms of regular exercise.

Posture

- Good posture is important as it puts your body in the best position for your joints and soft tissues to work effectively. This will aid the healing process and help prevent the pain from getting worse.
- **Sitting:** Avoid low chairs that allow your bottom to sink below your knees. Limit prolonged slouching.
- **Sleeping:** Most people benefit from having a medium to firm mattress. The mattress should be comfortable but firm enough to support the spine when lying on your back or side.
- **Lifting/Bending:** Where possible use your hips and knees to bend rather than your back. Avoid lifting and twisting where possible.
- **Driving:** Have your car seat fairly upright and raise your chair height if possible. A small rolled towel placed in the back may help support a better posture.

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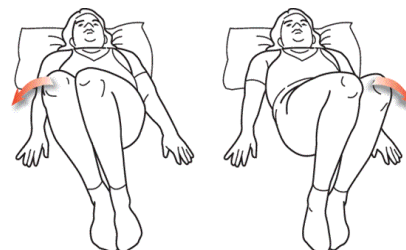
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Exercises

- It is essential to start active exercises as soon as you are able. This will help to increase the mobility in the back and reduce the pain.
- Try the following exercises at regular intervals through the day. They should be done slowly, moving into discomfort but not into excessive pain.

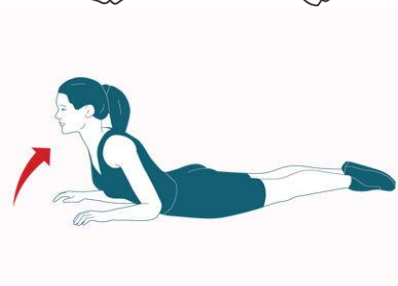
Lumbar rotation

- Lying on your back, gently roll your knees side to side in a slow controlled way and as far as you feel comfortable to go.
- Repeat 10 times to each side



Lumbar extension

- In standing or lying on your front, gently arch your back backwards as far as you feel comfortable to go.
- Repeat 10 times



Side flexion stretch

- Slide your hand sideways along your outer thigh as far as you feel comfortable to go. Do not lean forwards.
- Repeat 10 times to each side.



- If you find the exercises are making the pain worse stop doing them and speak to your GP or Physiotherapist.

Be positive and keep moving! There are many things you can do to help the healing process.

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Further Information

If you would like to seek the advice of a physiotherapist there are a number of options within Wiltshire. You can find a physiotherapy self-referral form on our website: www.wiltshirehealthandcare.nhs.uk. Fill this out and send to the address on the form and we will contact you. You can call the Community MSK Physiotherapy booking office on 01249 456510 if you need more information.

Useful websites:

<https://www.activewiltshire.org.uk/>

Here you will find information on improving your activity level and details of what is available in your local area.

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/public-health-weight>

Here you will find information about weight management options in your local area

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Back-pain/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Here you will find more information on managing back pain

Safeguarding

Wiltshire Health and Care have a strong commitment to care that is safe, of a high quality and that upholds our patients' rights. All our patients have the right to live lives free from abuse or neglect and, where they are able, to make or be supported to make informed decisions and choices about their treatment, care and support. Where patients are not able to make their own decisions, Wiltshire Health and Care staff are committed to ensuring that treatment, care and support is undertaken in accordance with the person's best interests. In order to fulfil these commitments, Wiltshire Health and Care follow the Safeguarding principles and responsibilities laid out in sections 42-46 of the Care Act (2014) and are informed by, and apply, the guiding principles and provisions of the Mental Capacity Act (2005). If you or your carer have any concerns about abuse, neglect or your rights in relation to care provided by Wiltshire Health and Care or any other agency or individual, please raise this directly with any Wiltshire Health and Care staff or contact the Safeguarding Adults Team by telephone on: 0300 4560111.

Wiltshire Health and Care Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any questions, or concerns, suggestions or compliments about our service, please speak to a member of staff. This information sheet is available in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 0300 1237797 and PALS.wiltshirehealthandcare@nhs.net

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