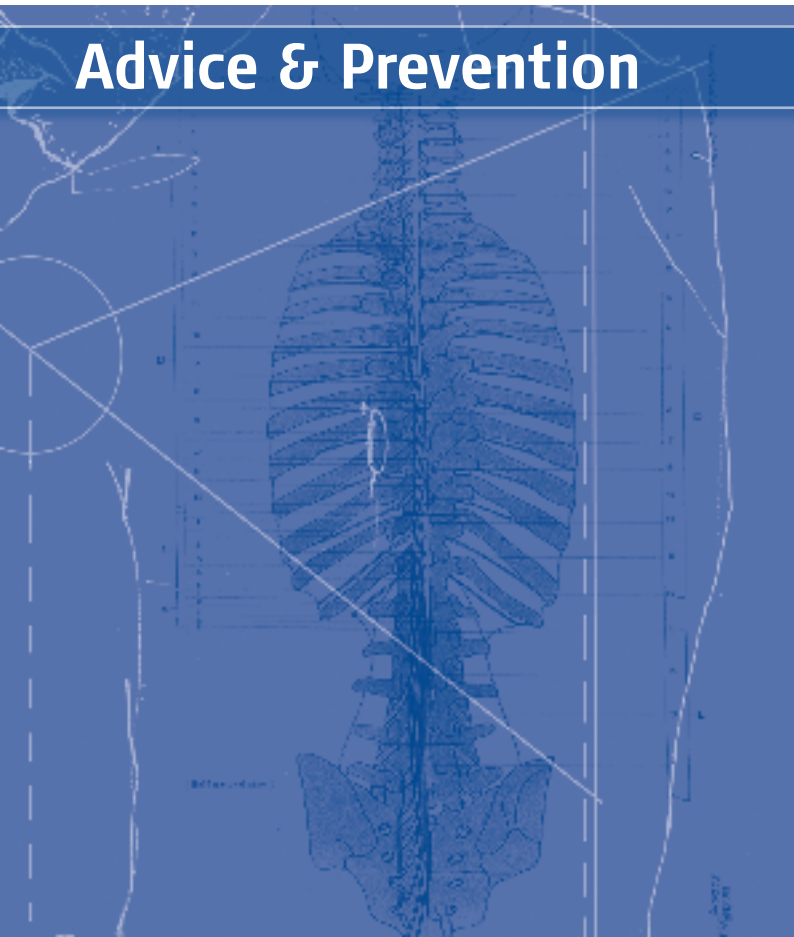


Back Pain

Advice & Prevention



Advice & Prevention

Back pain affects nearly everyone at some point in their life, but is rarely serious and most back pain settles quickly. By following the advice in this leaflet you may help to improve your recovery and ease your symptoms.

Factors contributing to back pain include:

- Poor posture
- Poor lifting techniques
- Being overweight
- Poor working positions
- Lack of fitness
- Neglecting to warm up prior to sport or exercise
- Smoking
- Pregnancy
- Age
- Pre-existing conditions such as Arthritis or Osteoporosis

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Structures responsible for the pain may include joints between each vertebrae, such as Facet joints, the discs and 'trapped' nerves.

Symptoms can include:

- Stiffness
- Restricted movement
- Low back ache
- Creaking joints
- Pain referred from the spine, down nerves into the legs, often called Sciatica
- Altered sensations such as numbness and pins & needles

What to do

Control the pain

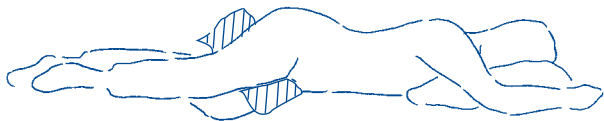
Anti-inflammatories and pain killers can prove useful in easing your pain but remember the actual cause of the pain will still be there. It is important that if you are already taking medication you should consult your GP or Pharmacist before taking any additional medication for your symptoms. Ice packs or heat can also provide pain relief as well as helping to reduce muscle spasm.

You will need to be careful with your back to prevent further damage or irritation, however in severe cases a couple of days rest **at most** may be beneficial. The following resting positions can help to support and rest the back which in turn can help rest any inflamed or irritated structures. These resting positions can be used for short-term periods of resting throughout the day.

However prolonged inactivity can make things worst, you may get stiffer, your muscles start to weaken, you begin to lose general fitness, movements can get even more painful which in the long-term can make you feel depressed. Gentle activity such as short walks can get the spine moving again, helping to speed your recovery.

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Resting Positions



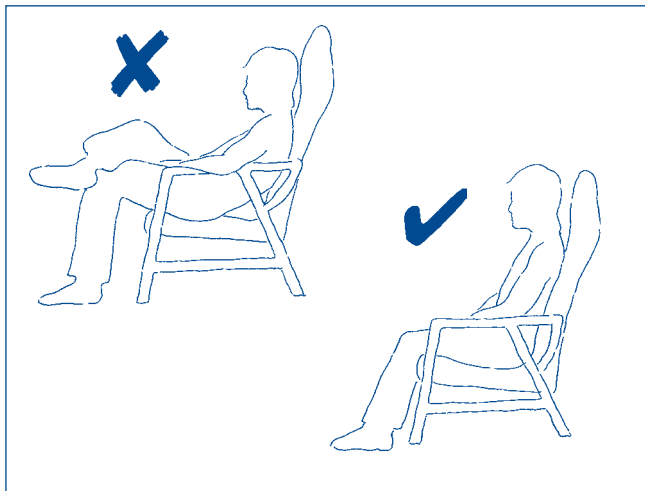
Back Pain Advice & Prevention

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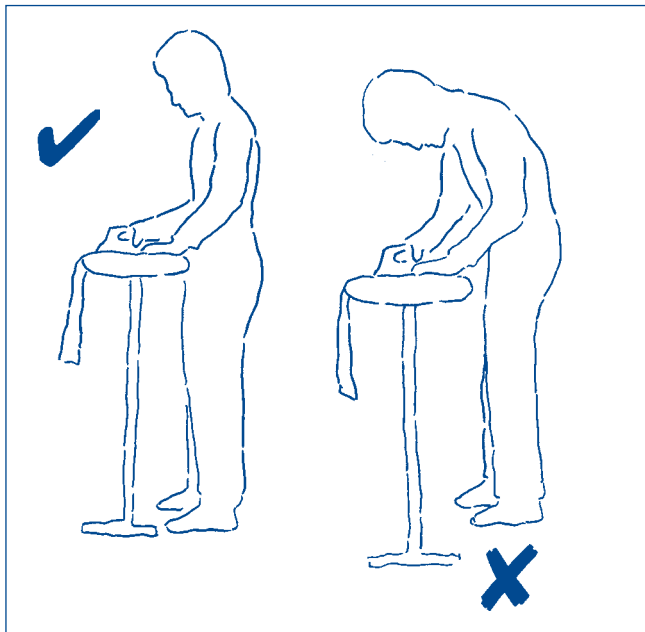
Sitting

Avoid lounging on the sofa, slouching whilst sitting, sitting up in bed and sitting for a long time.

Use an upright chair where possible, sit well back in the chair and use a lumbar support if fitted, alternatively try a small rolled up towel or a portable lumbar roll to support the small of your back. You may need to adjust a rolled up towel making the roll smaller or larger in order to achieve the best support and relief for yourself. Regularly interrupt prolonged sitting and re-correct your posture frequently.



Back Pain Advice & Prevention



Standing

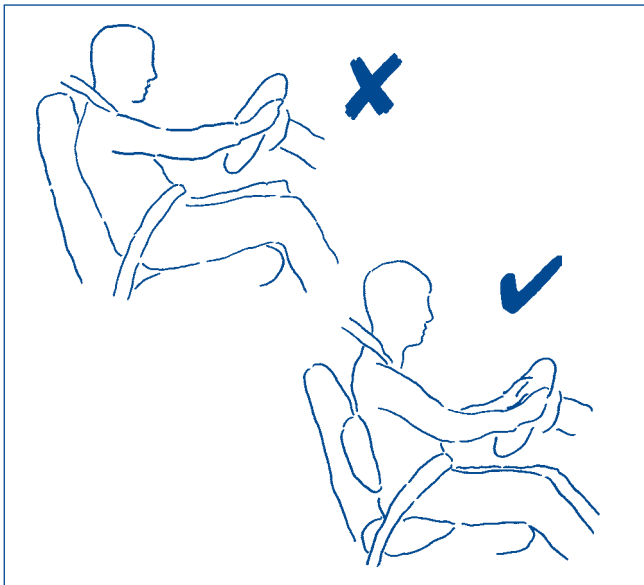
Avoid stooping down and standing for long periods. Stand tall but relaxed, have your work surface at a comfortable height to avoid the need to stoop, for example when ironing.

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Driving

Avoid sitting slumped in the car seat and driving for too long without a break.

When driving try a rolled up towel or lumbar roll in the small of your back (see sitting advice section). Move the car seat closer to the steering wheel to limit over stretching when steering and using the brake and clutch pedals. Interrupt a long journey with regular breaks, which allow you to get out of the car and walk around.



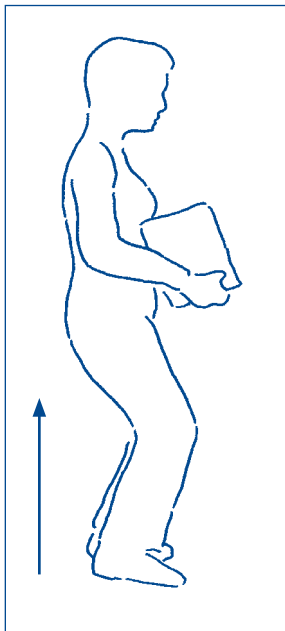
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Activity

Stay active and mobile, try short walks throughout the day. Bend at your knees or kneel when doing tasks at low positions, for example removing items from low draws or when loading/emptying the washing machine.

Moving & Handling

Assess the load to be moved, its environment and distance of transfer. Get help - manual or automated when moving heavy objects. Keep your back straight and bend your knees, hold the object close to your body and never twist your back. Step around with the object and keep your head upright.

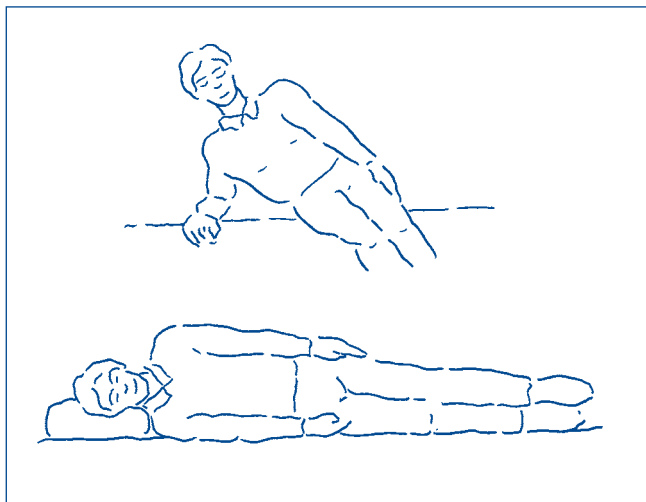


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Sleeping

Avoid a mattress which is too soft or hard. Don't stay in bed too long. Invest in a mattress which is firm yet supportive to your spine whilst sleeping and aim to replace it approximately every 7 years. Turn your mattress every 6 months to help maintain its shape and support.

Getting out of bed can be a problem whilst suffering with back pain, the best technique is to roll onto your side next to the edge of the bed, swing your legs over the edge and push up with your arm to get you into a sitting position. Then rise up from this sitting position maintaining your low back in a straight position.



Back Pain Advice & Prevention

Relax

Learn techniques to help reduce stress as being tense can also worsen your back symptoms. Yoga or Shiatsu can be helpful.

Exercise

Some forms of exercise may worsen an episode of back pain, if unsure consult your GP or a Chartered Physiotherapist for advice on what to do and when best to start. Initially the best form of exercise for the back is gentle walking, doing short, regular walks on flat level ground.

Important

The advice contained in this leaflet should be of benefit to most back pain sufferers. However this advice is not specific to an individual or condition. If you are unsure or your symptoms persist, worsen or new ones develop, do not continue.

Visit your GP or a Chartered Physiotherapist for specific assessment and advice. Furthermore if your back pain is severe or you are unwell and experience any of the following symptoms, you must visit your GP as soon as possible: difficulty passing urine, numbness around your genitals or back passage, numbness, pins & needles or weakness in both legs and unsteadiness on your feet.



Newcastle Sports Injury Clinic,

First Floor, City Pool, Northumberland Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8SE



Alnwick Physiotherapy Clinic,

Willowburn Sports & Leisure Centre, Willowburn Avenue, Alnwick NE66 2JH



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