



Back pain



Back pain is very common and normally improves within a few weeks or months.

Pain in the lower back (lumbago) is particularly common, although it can be felt anywhere along the spine – from the neck down to the hips.

In most cases the pain isn't caused by anything serious and will usually get better over time. There are things you can do to help relieve it. But sometimes the pain can last a long time or keep coming back.

Move to Improve



Support
Recovery
Exercise
Patient
Fitness
Healing
Joints
Self-management
Therapy
Rehabilitation
Bones
Tendons
Muscles
Empower



RELIEVING BACK PAIN

The following tips may help reduce your backache and speed up your recovery:

KEEP MOVING

Stay as active as possible and try to continue your daily activities – this is one of the most important things you can do, as resting for long periods is likely to make the pain worse.

Try exercises and stretches for back pain; other activities such as walking, swimming, yoga and pilates may also be helpful

HOT AND COLD PACKS

Use hot or cold compression packs for short-term relief – you can buy these from your local pharmacy, or a hot water bottle and a bag of frozen vegetables wrapped in a cloth will work just as well.

MINDSET

Although it can be difficult, it helps if you stay optimistic and recognise that your pain should get better, as people who manage to stay positive despite their pain tend to recover quicker.

PAINKILLERS

Anti-inflammatory tablets, such as ibuprofen, can help relieve back pain. Many types are available to buy from pharmacies or supermarkets without a prescription.

But these aren't suitable for everyone, so check the box or leaflet to see whether you can take the medicine first. Speak to a pharmacist if you're not sure.

If you can't take anti-inflammatories, alternative medicines such as codeine may help. This is a stronger painkiller that should ideally only be used for a few days at a time.

Paracetamol on its own isn't recommended for back pain, but it may be used alongside stronger painkillers, such as codeine.

MANUAL THERAPY

Manual therapy is the name for a group of treatments where a therapist uses their hands to move, massage and apply careful force to the muscles, bones and joints in and around your spine. It's usually carried out by chiropractors, osteopaths or physiotherapists.

It can help reduce your back pain, but should only be used alongside other measures, such as exercise.

You can refer yourself to the physiotherapist on the NHS by ringing 0300 456 9987.

Chiropractic and osteopathy aren't widely available on the NHS, and you'll usually have to pay for treatment.

PREVENTING BACK PAIN

KEEPING YOUR BACK STRONG

Strengthening and stretching the muscles in your back may help protect it from further problems.

If you've had back pain in the past or experience it regularly, including some back exercises as part of your daily routine may help.

Doing regular low-impact exercise may also help. Swimming, yoga and pilates are good for improving flexibility and strength. Once you feel your back is strong enough, you might want to try something more energetic, such as jogging, cycling or dancing.

SITTING, DRIVING AND LIFTING

Sitting in the wrong position may cause or aggravate back pain.

Driving can prove a real challenge for backs, especially if you drive for extended periods of time.

Computers can be a problem when it comes to back or neck strain. Ensuring your workspace is set up correctly may help reduce the potential for harm