

North Eastern Derbyshire



Primary Care Trust

**Advice Following
Recent Onset Of
Low Back Pain**

This leaflet is designed to supplement
the advice given by your G.P.

Back Facts

- Back pain or ache is very common but usually not due to any serious disease
- Most back pain settles quickly
- It can be disabling and you may need to decrease some activities for a time. But rest for more than a day or two usually does not help and may do more harm than good
- It is surprisingly difficult to damage your spine

Causes of Back Pain

- Very few people with back pain have a serious disc or nerve injury. Even when severe, back pain usually gets better by itself.
- X-rays of your back are not always appropriate as they usually only show the changes that occur with age. These changes are normal just like grey hair and are not arthritis.
- Most back pain comes from the muscles, ligament and joints in your back. They are simply not moving and working as they should. You can think of your back as out of condition. So what you need to do is get your back working properly again.
- In most people we cannot pinpoint the exact source of the trouble. It can be frustrating not to know exactly what is wrong, but in another way it is good news - you do not have any serious disease or any serious damage to your back.

Warning Signs

- If you have severe pain which gets worse over several weeks instead of better or if you are generally unwell with back pain then you should see your doctor

Here are a few symptoms which are all very rare but if you do have back pain and suddenly develop any of these then you should see your doctor straight away.

- Difficulty passing or controlling urine
- Numbness around your back passage or genitals
- Numbness, pins and needles or weakness in both legs
- Unsteadiness on your feet

REMEMBER

- Back pain is common
- Even when it is very painful, that usually does not mean there is any serious damage to your back
- Hurt does not mean harm
- Bed rest for more than a day or two is usually bad for your back
- Staying active will help you get better faster and prevent more back troubles

**PRODUCED BY
NORTH EASTERN DERBYSHIRE PRIMARY CARE TRUST
PHYSIOTHERAPY DEPARTMENT
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Rest or Active Exercise

You may need to reduce your activity when the pain is bad. You may be forced to have a day or two in bed at the start. But the most important thing is to get moving again as soon as you can.

Dealing with an acute attack

Control of Pain - Your G.P. will have advised on the appropriate and safe use of pain relief. These may be for a day or two or a few weeks. Take them regularly as advised and do not wait until your pain is out of control.

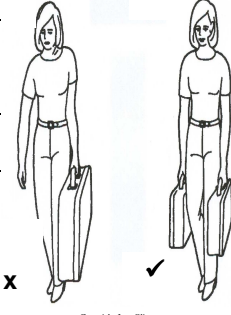
Heat and Cold - In the first 48 hours you can try a cold pack on your back for 5-10 mins at a time - a bag of frozen peas or ice cubes wrapped in a damp towel. Other people prefer heat — a bath, shower or hot water bottle wrapped in a towel.

Staying Active - After a short period of rest you should build up your activities over a few days or weeks. Modifying your activities and getting help from family and work colleague will help you recover as quick as possible - even if you have some pain and restriction at first.

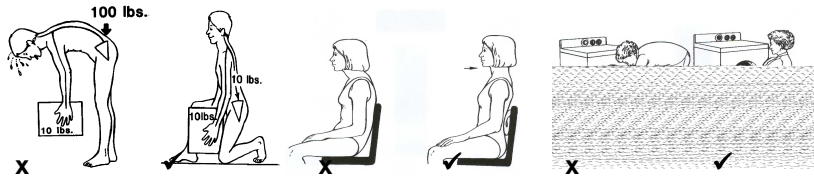
	Some ways to help your pain	Some things which may make your pain worse
Lifting	Avoid completely when acute. Lift only what you can handle and carry close to the body. Don't twist your back - turn with your feet. Bend your knees and make your legs do the work. If carrying bags try to balance the weight equally.	Lifting without thinking. Repetitive lifting. Bending your back
Sitting	Use an upright chair. Keep your knees lower than your hips. Try a rolled up towel in the small of your back. Get up and stretch every 20 minutes.	A low soft chair. Lack of back support. Sitting for a long time
Standing	Try to put one foot up on a stool or low box. Have your work surface at a comfortable height.	Long periods in one position
Driving	As little as possible when acute. Adjust your seat from time to time. Try a rolled up towel in the small of your back.	Long drives without a break
Activity	Gradually increase your activity every day, remember early return to activity will help your recovery.	Sitting around all day not exercising
Sleeping	Ensure your mattress doesn't sag - if so try boards beneath or place mattress on floor. If lying on your side you may find a pillowcase between your knees will help. Similarly if lying on your back try a pillow under your knees.	Staying in bed too long
Coughing/Sneezing	If possible try to lean backwards and maintain the curve in the small of your back whilst coughing/sneezing.	



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Some gentle exercises you may find useful in the acute stage

* These exercises can be performed several times a day but keep them to small amounts that you are comfortable with

Knee Rolling

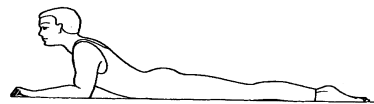
Lie on your back with knees together and bend slowly with your knees from side to side keeping your trunk still



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Back Bends

1) Lie on your tummy with forearms supporting you. Try to sustain this position for 5 to 10 minutes if comfortable



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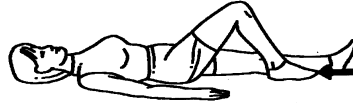
2) As a progression of the above, keep your hips down and push up with arms to arch your back, then slowly lower your body down again



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Knee and Hip bends

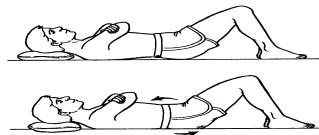
Lie on your back. Bend up your knee as high as comfortable then slowly lower



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Pelvic Tilt

Lie on your back with knees bent. Tighten tummy muscles, squeeze buttock muscles and flatten back as shown. Then relax. Do not lift hips off the floor.



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Walking

Try to have regular short walks. But remember to stick within your limit.