

Back Pain Brief Advice

Service User Information Leaflet

NHS Fife provides accessible communication in a variety of formats including for people who are speakers of community languages, who require Easy Read versions, who speak BSL, read Braille or use Audio formats.

NHS Fife SMS text service number 07805800005 is available for people who have a hearing or speech impairment.

To find out more about accessible formats contact:
fife-UHB.EqualityandHumanRights@nhs.net or phone 01592 729130

About Back Pain

Back pain is very common. It can be increased by simple things like staying in one position for too long or lifting something. Many peoples' back pain starts for no obvious reason, which can be very frustrating. The spine is strong and back pain is rarely due to any serious disease or damage. X-rays and scan (MRI) are not normally needed.

- Approximately 80% of the UK population gets back pain at some point in their lives.
- Most back pain settles within four to six weeks.
- It is common for back pain to return.
- Less than 2% of people in the UK with back pain will need surgery.

Should I be resting or moving?

Keep moving, even if slowly at first.

Change position regularly and avoid sitting for too long.

Get back to normal as soon as possible (this includes staying at work or getting back to work)

Try to keep active, even if you have to alter things at first

If you have pain in your leg (sciatica) you may have to rest more at the start. Try to remain active.

Bed rest is not a treatment for back pain.

Should I take pain relief?

Taking painkillers can be really useful to help keep you moving.

If you are taking painkillers or anti-inflammatories, take them regularly as directed. Don't just take them when you are sore.

Follow the instructions on the packet.

You may want to speak to your pharmacist or your GP to get advice about which medication is best for you.

Issue No. 3.3.1.7	Date of Issue: May 2018	Review Date: Oct 2022 If review date has passed the content will apply until the next version is published
-------------------	-------------------------	---

Should I use ice or a heat pack?

If you have had the injury in the last two days, wrap ice in a damp towel and hold it against the area where you feel the pain on your back. Leave it on for ten to fifteen minutes. You can repeat this every two to three hours. Check your skin often. Make sure you use a damp towel between the ice and skin to avoid an ice burn. Do this a few times per day until you begin to feel better.

After three days you may find that heat is more relaxing and a heat pad can help. Make sure it is not too hot and is covered in a towel. Use for 10 to 15 minutes a few times a day.

Should I Rest with Leg Pain?

Full bed rest is not recommended. You may find that you have to lie down if the pain is severe. Try to get up for short periods as soon as your pain allows. Most people are able to move normally within 2-3 weeks. You may still have some pain. If you cannot manage this then you should consult your doctor.

What about work?

You may recover faster if you can get back to work as early as possible. Do not worry if you are not 100% pain free. You may have to carry out light duties at first. Try to remain active and remember to keep moving. Discuss any concerns you may have with your employer as soon as you can.

For free and confidential advice about work call the Health Working Lives Advice Line on 0800 019 2211

Do I need to see my GP?

Not in the majority of cases. By following the right advice and taking the right medication available from a community pharmacist, your back problem should improve over the next couple of weeks.

If you have any of the following, we strongly recommend you seek medical advice:

- Severe pain which is getting worse over several weeks, or feeling generally unwell.
- Your back pain starts when you are ill with other problems such as rheumatoid arthritis or cancer.
- Your problem, does not settle after four weeks.
- Numbness pins and needles or weakness in one or both legs.
- Unsteadiness on your feet.

Issue No. 3.3.1.7	Date of Issue: May 2018	Review Date: Oct 2022 If review date has passed the content will apply until the next version is published
-------------------	-------------------------	---

Cauda Equina Syndrome Warning Signs

Many patients have a combination of back pain, leg pain, leg numbness and weakness. These symptoms can be distressing, but do not necessarily require emergency medical attention.

A rare, but serious back condition, Cauda Equina Syndrome, can lead to permanent damage or disability and will need to be seen by an Emergency Specialist Spinal Team. Some warning signs of Cauda Equina Syndrome are as follows:

- Loss of feeling/pins and needles between your inner thighs or genitals
- Numbness in or around your back passage or buttocks
- Altered feeling when using toilet paper to wipe yourself
- Increasing difficulty when you try to urinate
- Increasing difficulty when you try to stop or control your flow of urine
- Loss of sensation when you pass urine
- Leaking urine or recent need to use pads
- Not knowing when your bladder is either full or empty
- Inability to stop a bowel movement or leaking
- Loss of sensation when you pass a bowel motion
- Change in ability to achieve an erection or ejaculate
- Loss of sensation in genitals during sexual intercourse

Any one or combination of these seek medical help immediately

Further Information and Useful Resources

NHS Inform

www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/muscle-bone-and-joints

Backcare

www.backcare.org.uk

Back Pain Overview

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BOjTegn9RuY>

Produced by Fife Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Service

Issue No. 3.3.1.7	Date of Issue: May 2018	Review Date: Oct 2022 If review date has passed the content will apply until the next version is published
-------------------	-------------------------	---