

Emergency Department

Self Treatment of Low Back Pain



Low back Pain is extremely common and can affect 4 out of 5 people at some point in their life. It is rarely concerning and 98% of people will fully recover.

Symptoms may include:

- Pain in your lower back which may radiate to your buttock or leg.
- Tension / spasm in the muscles of your back.
- Altered posture or difficulty moving your back normally.
- Less commonly: pins and needles, numbness or weakness in one or both legs.

Be reassured - severe pain doesn't necessarily indicate a serious problem. Pain does not always indicate harm or damage.

Recommended treatment for Low Back Pain:



The following advice can help ease symptoms:

- Pain medication. Speak to your local pharmacist or health care professional about taking regular medication.
- Heat packs.
- Change position regularly and find a position which helps relieve symptoms.
- Stay active!
- Return to normal activities as quickly as pain allows.
- Fear can cause a barrier to recovery. Being positive improves quality of life and can improve outcome!
- Complete the exercises shown regularly throughout the day. Repeat as many times as you are able.

Exercises:

Exercise 1



Rotate your lower back by rolling your knees to each side, keeping your feet on the bed.

Exercise 2



Lift your knee towards your chest; use your hands to stretch as far as you are able.

Exercise 3



Tilt your pelvis, flattening your lower back onto the bed.

Exercise 4



Lift your bottom, keeping your shoulders and feet on the bed.

Exercise 5



In standing, bend to the right and the left.

Advice continued:



Keeping active is an essential part of your treatment. It is important to keep your lower back moving whilst you recover to prevent stiffness and help you improve faster. Long periods of inactivity can slow down your recovery.

Being physically active throughout your recovery will:

- Prevent recurrence of the problem.
- Maintain current levels of fitness.
- Keep muscles and joints flexible.

It is recommended that you stay at work or return as quickly as possible during your recovery. You do not need to be pain or symptom free to return to work.

Try to stay positive! Remember, most back pain settles with time! 😊

Occasionally low back pain can be a sign of an underlying condition. If your symptoms persist or worsen, despite following the advice in this leaflet, please discuss with your GP or physiotherapist.

In **extremely rare** circumstances low back pain can cause Cauda Equina Syndrome. This would be treated as an **emergency** and you should attend the Emergency Department as soon as possible. The symptoms are detailed below:



Cauda Equina Syndrome Warning Signs

- 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
combination
seek help
immediately**

Useful Information and Contacts:



NHS Forth Valley website has lots of useful information and contacts:

www.nhsforthvalley.com/health-services/know-who-to-turn-to-when-you-are-ill

GP contact details can be found at www.nhsforthvalley.com/health-services/local-service-finder/ or by calling NHS 24 on 111.

NHS Inform provides health information and details of services and support in your area. Call free on 0800 224488 or visit www.nhsinform.co.uk



For people with mental health or psychological problems and in crisis, support is available by phoning NHS 24 on 111, Samaritans on 116 123 or Breathing Space on 0800 83 85 87.

The Musculoskeletal (MSK) Helpline is a service for people experiencing MSK disorders such as back pain or sports injuries. Phone 0800 917 9390 (9am to 5pm Mon to Fri). Calls are free.



NHS 24
Call the free national NHS helpline on 111

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