

What else can I do to help my pain?

- Stress and tension can make your pain feel worse.
- It is natural to worry about your back. This worry can cause more tension in your back. This leads to more pain.
- Remember, hurt does not mean harm or damage.

Try to do something that helps you relax.
For example, imagine something calm; listen to music.

Try this exercise to help back tension and pain.



Find a comfortable position.
Focus on your breathing.
Slow and steady breathing.
“Let go” of tension as you breathe out.

This can take 10-15minutes.

When should I seek help?

These are *very rare* symptoms. Contact a doctor if you have any of:

- Recent difficulty passing or controlling urine
- A change in sensation around your back passage or genitals
- Numbness, pins and needles, or weakness in both legs
- Recent unsteadiness on your feet
- Severe pain that gets *worse* over several weeks
- You are unwell with your back pain.

References:

www.scottishbacks.co.uk

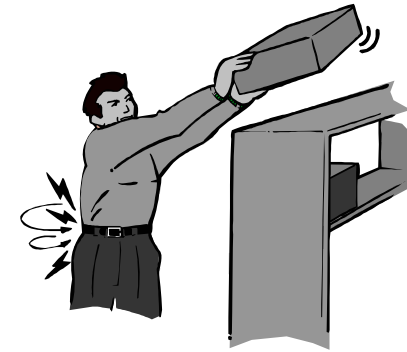
www.tso.co.uk -“The Back Book”

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This leaflet was compiled by Edinburgh Community Physiotherapy Service in conjunction with the Patient Information Leaflet Group, NHS Lothian Physiotherapy Services

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Back pain



A guide for patients

Most back pain settles with time.

There is a lot you can do to help yourself.

Serious or permanent damage is rare.

Don't stop, but change how you do things.

Keep moving.

What are the facts?

- Back pain is very common. There is a lot you can do help. What you do is often more important than an exact diagnosis.
- Most back pain settles with time. Acute pain improves in few days or weeks.
- Pain can last for a long time, or may come and go. This does not mean your back problem is serious.
- Most back strains do not cause lasting damage.
- Back pain is rarely due to serious disease or damage. Even minor back strains can be very painful.

Do I need an x-ray or a scan?

No, it is very unlikely that you will need these. They may be misleading when words like 'degeneration' are used. Degeneration is normal with age – just like wrinkles or grey hair. Tests will be arranged only if necessary.

Should I take pain-killers or anti-inflammatories?



Yes, you should take medication regularly, as prescribed. A pharmacist, or your GP, can advise you which medication may be best for you.

Should I use heat or cold?



Yes, a heat pad, or cold pack, can help give your back relief for a while. Leave it on for up to 10-20 minutes. Test which one works better for you. If you use a cold pack, remember to put a damp tea towel around it to protect your skin.

You will have good and bad days – that's normal.

Try to stop yourself from over-doing-it on a "good day" – this can help speed up your recovery

Should I keep moving? Should I rest?

- ✓ Keeping moving helps you recover.
- ✓ Staying active keeps your joints mobile and your muscles strong.
- ✓ The spine is very strong.
- ☒ Bed rest is not a treatment. It can make your back weaker.
- ☒ If you rest too much, your back will quickly get out of condition.

Moving your back may hurt a bit. This does not damage your back. Hurt is not the same as harm or damage.



- You may have to take things a little easier at first. Build up steadily over a few days or weeks.
- Don't stop doing your normal activities – just change the way you do them.
- Try to remain at work, or get back to work as soon as possible; even if you still have some pain.

What can I do to help my back?

- ✓ Keep moving. Try not to stay in one position for more than 20-30 minutes. Move and walk *before* you stiffen up.
- ✓ Exercise and fitness will help you; try walking, cycling and swimming (vary the strokes). Build up slowly.
- ✓ If you do have to limit some of your activities, try to build them back into your life over a few days or weeks.
- ✓ Experiment with different chairs and driving positions. Adjust your seat.
- ✓ Consider the things that make your pain worse. Think about the postures that make your pain better. Use this knowledge to help control your pain.



Turn over to the next page...