



Acute Back Pain Advice



Most people experience back pain at some point in their life, but it can be very alarming if it is your first episode, or a particularly severe episode. The pain may be limited to the back or may spread to the buttock, groin, leg or foot. The pain can be the result of a range of conditions that affect muscles, joints, discs, ligaments or nerves in the back.

How to help yourself

1. In the first 24 – 48 hours, **apply ice** (frozen peas / crushed ice wrapped in a damp tea towel), for 15 – 20 minutes every few hours. This will reduce the inflammation. If there is a lot of muscle spasm, you may prefer heat.
2. **Keep moving** –try to continue to act as usual, returning to work and other activities as soon as possible, but give yourself smaller goals and pace your activities. Bed rest is not a treatment for lower back pain and can lead to stiffness and weakness.
3. If you do need to rest in the day, use any **comfortable positions** – try lying on your back on the bed or floor with the knees bent up and feet on the bed/floor or try lying on your tummy.
4. Take **simple regular pain relief** from the chemist, following the instructions on the packet. If you need something stronger, see your G.P. and take prescribed medicines regularly, not just when the pain gets too bad.
5. Try to keep **good posture** at all times –when sitting, use a small roll or cushion in the small of your back and keep your bottom and back well back against the backrest. When sleeping, you may feel comfortable with a pillow under your knees or between them if you are lying on your side.
6. If symptoms persist beyond a few weeks you may wish to come and have an assessment with us, so that we can **tailor a treatment plan specifically for you**.

The following symptoms are very rare, but you should consult your doctor if:

- You have severe pain that gets worse over several weeks or feel generally unwell
- You have had a recent serious fall or accident
- You have difficulty passing or controlling urine
- You have numbness around the back passage or genitals
- You have numbness, pins and needles or weakness in both legs at the same time
- You are unsteady on your feet



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