

Low Back Pain

This is a short guide for **low back pain**.

Low back pain describes tension, soreness and/or stiffness in the lower back, in most cases without a specific underlying cause. You're not alone – **low back pain** affects 8 out of 10 people in the UK at some time in their life but **low back pain** is rarely due to a serious underlying cause, even if you're in quite a lot of pain. Backs are made for moving. Despite your pain, try and get back to normal activities as soon as you can – the sooner, the better.

Your back is likely to get better by itself within 6 to 12 weeks, and often sooner. **Back pain** usually gets better without medical treatment or surgery, even when a 'slipped disc' is responsible

So what can you do to get better?

- Simple back exercises, improving your posture, yoga
- Avoid lying in bed and remain active as far as possible, even if you're uncomfortable.
- A hot bath or hot water bottle can ease pain from tense muscles, while cold from an ice pack or a bag of frozen can help relieve discomfort from sudden back pain.
- 'Rub-on' (topical) treatments and pain killers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen are effective in most cases. Stronger medicines, such as codeine are an additional option when simpler ones are not working. Ask your pharmacist for advice.
- Take the strain off your back by trying different sleeping positions and putting a pillow between your legs or under your knees if you prefer lying on your back.
- Try to stay at work or return to work as soon as you can and together with our employer consider options such as a phased return to work, altered hours, amended duties or workplace adaptations.

Seek medical advice if your symptoms signs include:

- You have severe pain that gets worse rather than better.
- You feel really unwell from your back pain.
- You have a fever (a temperature of over 38°C, or 100.4°F) as well.
- You have back pain that travels up into higher areas of your chest.
- Your pain started after a major injury (such as a fall or an accident).
- You have new back pain and you're younger than 20 or older than 50 years.
- You have night-time pain that affects your sleep.
- You've become unsteady on your feet since your back pain started.
- You've also been losing weight for no obvious reason.
- You feel numb or notice 'pins and needles' in the area around your bottom (the 'saddle area'), your genitals, or both of your legs.
- can't keep your urine in.
- You lose your bowel control

Did you know you can self refer to the local physio service and the form to access this can be downloaded from the CCG website or collected from your GP practice

More information can be found on the NHS website: www.nhs.uk/conditions