



BACK PAIN

Back pain is a very common problem and in most cases is nothing to worry about. It often settles on its own over a period of a few weeks to a couple of months.

Your Doctor may also refer to it as Lumbago, this is just another way of saying 'low back pain'.

Back pain, particularly if you have had it for a long period of time, can be debilitating. Often it can interfere with your day to day activities, work and family life.

This is when you need to seek advice and help.

There are a number of things that can help you manage and improve your symptoms, getting you back to a fuller life.



TORUS
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Signs And Symptoms of Back Pain

Pain can be felt in the low back, across the hips and pelvis but it is also common to feel back pain higher up between the shoulders too. Often this can be related to work, posture or activity.

- Back pain can be sharp, or dull and achy - often people describe a toothache type pain, but this is not always the case
- You may also experience pain that is either constant (doesn't change and is there all the time), or intermittent (pain that comes and goes).
- Pain may vary within the day and day to day, depending on what you do, this is normal.
- You may feel stiff first thing in the morning - this is because you have been less active in the night that you are in the day
- Pain may be worse with activities like lifting, carrying and bending
- Symptoms are often worse when you are static, the less movement you do, the stiffer and more painful you can become. Movement helps.
- Tends to get better and worse depending on your position

Causes of Back Pain

There is no one cause of back pain but it may be related to an activity, movement, incident or accident that you have had. Pain may develop suddenly, for example after doing something in particular, or gradually over time.

Medically, back pain is often categorised as 'non-specific', meaning that there is no obvious cause, or 'mechanical' which indicates that there is some involvement from the muscles, joints and tissues of the back.

- Posture - Work related postures - sitting for long periods, driving or bending (for example gardening) can cause pain
- Strains or pulls of the back muscles can be painful, perhaps following over activity
- Spasm of the back muscles
- A 'slipped disc' where the disc in the back protrudes and presses on a nerve.
- Osteoarthritis or Rheumatoid arthritis can cause back pain due to changes in the joints themselves
- Stress - it seems difficult to understand but stress and anxiety can actually increase back pain. Chemicals released by the brain when you are stressed or anxious act on the nervous system and make it more sensitive, therefore increasing the pain experience
- Pregnancy or post-partum
- Rarely there may be a fracture in the spine - this could be a result of serious injury after an accident or a fall or due to Osteoporosis (reduced bone strength) of the spine.

If you develop back pain after an accident, injury or fall then it is always advisable to contact your GP for advice and further investigation.

Top Tips to Manage Back Pain

Back pain will usually improve over a few weeks and resolve on its own, but there are a number of things you can try at home to help with your symptoms:

- Keep moving - Although it feels like you want to stay still and rest, backs actually like movement. Gentle activity like walking helps to direct the nutrients, blood and Oxygen to where they are needed to aid recovery.
- Avoid static positions - Similar to above, you may feel like you want to stay still and lie or sit for long periods but this can actually make the pain worse.
- Pain relief - In most cases, over the counter medication like paracetamol can be effective in reducing pain. A lot of people don't like taking pain relief but regular pain relief over a short period can help you to move more easily which actually helps you to heal. If you find that the over the counter medication is not effective to manage your pain, speak to the Pharmacist for further advice
- Anti-Inflammatories - Non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs) like Ibuprofen and Naproxen may also be helpful for pain however please check with your GP that you are able to take these before commencing on a course. NSAIDs are not suitable for anyone with breathing difficulties, some heart conditions, previous stroke or gastrointestinal issues.
- Physiotherapy - Physiotherapists can expertly guide you through an individualised plan of treatment and management
- Heat vs Cold - There is no hard and fast rule but heat tends to be better for muscular back pain

Further Support - when to seek help

If you feel that the pain is getting worse rather than better, or that the pain is not controlled by painkillers, then contact your GP for further advice.

If you have any of the following symptoms, you need to seek immediate help, attended A&E or contact 999

- Inability to pass urine
- Loss of control of your bladder or bowels (soiling or wetting yourself)
- Loss of sensation around your bladder outlet when wiping yourself.
- Loss of sensation during sexual intercourse
- Bilateral, unremitting leg pain with or without pins and needles
- For further information and a thorough assessment, contact the Torus wellbeing book an appointment email:

info@toruswellbeingclinic.co.uk



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