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NHS
Sherwood Forest Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Managing back pain

Lower back pain
Low back pain is very common and what you do in the early stages is important.

The spine is one of the strongest parts of your body. The way it is put together is designed for movement. It is surrounded by strong muscles and ligaments that support and protect the spine.

We do not advise resting for more than a couple of days after the onset of your lower back pain. This is because the spine needs movement to start recovery.

Your back pain will usually improve within a few days or weeks so that you can return to your normal activities.

Your GP will be able to discuss your pain with you. They may prescribe pain medication during the early stages to help you start moving. Early mobilisation of the lower back will help you recover quicker and then you will be able to wean off your medication.

Often back pain can be distressing, but in most cases, this is not due to any serious disease or damage.

Why stay active?
- Moving will prevent the joints in your spine from becoming stiff. Stiff joints may lead to pain.
- It will help to keep your muscles strong while you are recovering.
- You will feel more positive.
- It will help to reduce the severity of your pain.
- It will speed up your return to normal activities.

What sort of activities?
Recent evidence has shown that people who participate in regular exercise are less likely to develop chronic (long standing) back pain. The exercises that you complete should be dependent on your level of fitness and mobility.

There is no ‘perfect’ type of exercise for low back pain. It is therefore much better to do a type of exercise that you enjoy participating in. Examples include:

- Walking
- Swimming
- Pilates
- Yoga
- Dance.

We appreciate that in the early days or weeks these may be a little too intense. To begin with we would recommend that you do simple exercises to get you moving. These exercises could include:

- **Pelvic tilting.** Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the bed. Flatten your lower back onto the bed so that the front of your pelvis tilts towards your ribs and then slowly release.

Do this in a gentle rocking motion for 30 seconds to 1 minute.



- **Knee rolling.** In the same position gently lower your knees from side to side. Start with very small movements and increase as your lower back loosens up. Do this for 30 seconds to 1 minute.



- **Knee tucks.** Grasp your knees and gently pull them into your chest. Try to keep your shoulders on the bed. Pause for a couple of seconds and then return to the starting position. If you are having difficulty with this try completing it with one leg at a time. Try to repeat this 10 times.

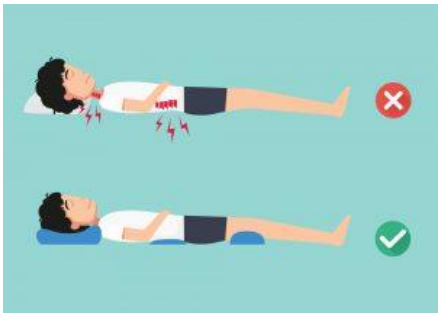


- **Back extensions.** Lying face down on the bed with your hands under your shoulders, straighten your arms so that your upper trunk lifts up off the bed. Keep the front of your hips on the bed and your pelvis and legs relaxed.

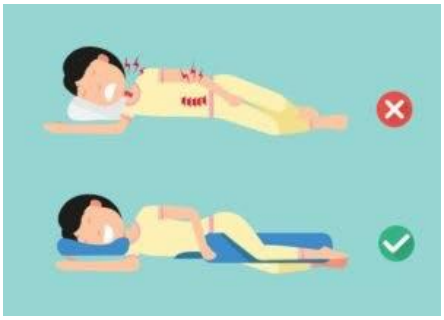


Comfortable positions

Lie on your back with a pillow or two under your knees.



Lie on your side with a pillow between your knees. Sometimes a rolled-up towel around your waist can also help.



Change lifestyle factors

Try to stay at work. Keep in contact with your employers and discuss your options for lighter duties or reduced hours.

Check for everyday things which may be aggravating your back. These might include stress, repetitive and/or uncomfortable postures at work, at home or while driving, or long periods of sitting. Take regular breaks when travelling long distances.

Signs to look out for

Seek medical support (from your GP or ring NHS 111) if you develop any of the following symptoms:

- Loss of feeling/pins and needles between your inner thighs or genitals or anal passage.

- Altered feeling when using toilet paper to wipe yourself.
- Increasing difficulty when you try to urinate.
- Increasing difficulty when you try to urinate, or 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.

Further Information
NICE: The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence has developed a guideline which tells you more about the management of lower back pain:
https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng59

Advice and tips can also be found on the following NHS Choices link:
https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/back-pain/

Most importantly, remain positive. There is a lot you can do to help yourself. Remember that most back pain settles with time.

Contact details
Physiotherapy Outpatients Department
Clinic 10
King's Treatment Centre
King's Mill Hospital
Mansfield Road
Sutton in Ashfield
Notts
NG17 4JL

- **Clinic telephone number:** 01623 672384.
- **Clinic reception opening times:** 8am – 4.15pm, Monday to Friday.

Further sources of information
NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions
Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)
PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222
Newark Hospital: 01636 685692
Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you need this information in a different language or format, please contact the PET (as above).

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet, please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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