

## Fact sheet No.1



## Easy Read

# Lower back pain



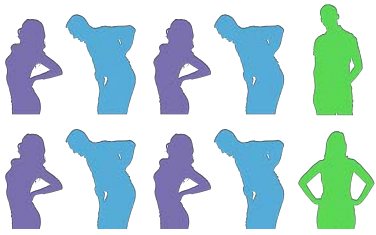
This fact sheet helps you to know what's 'normal' and what you can expect to happen if you get a pain in your lower back.

It also tells you when you should become concerned and see your doctor.



### **What is lower back pain?**

Low back pain can be tension, soreness or stiffness in your lower back.



## How common is back pain?

It is very common. Lower back pain affects 8 out of 10 people in the UK at some time in their life.



## Are my symptoms likely to be serious?

No, lower back pain usually is not due to a serious problem. Even if you're in quite a lot of pain.



## Do I need to rest?

Backs are made for moving.

Even though you are in pain, try and get up and about as soon as you can – the sooner, the better.

# What should happen?



Your back is likely to get better by itself within 6 to 12 weeks.



But you may get twinges and aches for weeks and months.



## **Do I need any medical treatment or surgery?**

Back pain usually gets better without medical treatment or surgery, even when a 'slipped disc' is responsible.



## **Will I need further tests?**

You are not likely to need **X-rays** or any other tests.



An **X-ray** is a type of photograph of inside your body.

# What can I do myself to get better?



## Back exercises

Simple back exercises can be helpful.



For more exercises go to: [www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Back-pain/Pages/Prevention.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Back-pain/Pages/Prevention.aspx)

## Keep moving

Don't just lie in bed.



Keep being active as far as possible, even if you're uncomfortable.

This won't harm your back, and you can expect to get better more quickly.

Stay positive and keep going out to do things you enjoy.

## Heat and cold



A hot bath or hot water bottle can ease pain.



The cold from an ice pack or a bag of frozen peas can help.

Wrap a bag of frozen peas in a wet cloth and put it on the painful area.



## Painkillers

Pain killers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen will help in most cases.

Stronger medicines, like codeine, might help.



Ask your pharmacist for advice.

## Sleeping position

Take the strain off your back by trying different sleeping positions.



Try putting a pillow between your legs or under your knees if you prefer lying on your back.



## Lifting

Lift close to your body.

Bend your knees instead of your back.

Try not to lift heavy things.



## Work

Try to stay at work or go back to work as soon as you can.

You could talk to your boss about going back part time to start with.

They could also give you jobs that don't hurt your back until you are totally better.



Your local doctor (GP) can give you a **fit note** if you need to stay off work for more than a week.



The **fit note** used be called the **sick note**.

## Other treatments

You could try:



- **Physiotherapy.**

Physiotherapy helps uses movement, exercise, and manual therapy to help people



- **Acupuncture.**

Acupuncture is a traditional Chinese treatment where thin needles are stuck into the body.



- **A chiropractor.**

A chiropractor will press and stretch your muscles, joints and bones.



- **An osteopath.**

An osteopath will manipulate your muscles and bones.

**Make sure they're registered.**

# When should I seek medical help?



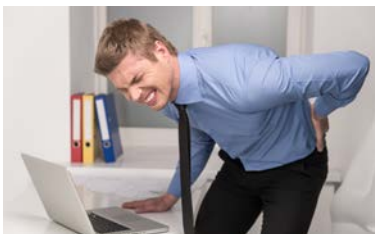
You should contact your local doctor (GP) if:

- Your back doesn't improve in three days
- Your back pain keeps coming back

You should seek medical advice straight away if:

## **Your pain gets worse**

You have severe pain that gets worse rather than better.



## **You feel unwell**

You feel really unwell from your back pain.



## **You have a fever**

You have a temperature of over 38°C, or 100.4°F as well.







## **You also have a chest pain**

You have back pain that travels up into higher areas of your chest.



## **You have been injured**

Your pain started after a fall or an accident.



## **You are young or old**

You have new back pain and you're younger than 20 or older than 50 years.



## **You can't sleep**

You have night-time pain that affects your sleep.



## **Walking is a problem**

You've become unsteady on your feet since your back pain started.



## **You have lost weight**

You've also been losing weight for no obvious reason.



You may need to go to accident and emergency at your nearest hospital if:

## **You have unusual feelings**

You feel numb or notice 'pins and needles' in the area around your bottom, your genitals, or both of your legs.



## **You have problems with your wee**

You can't keep your urine in.



## **You have problems with your poo**

You lose your bowel control.

# Where can I find out more?



## **NHS Choices**

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Back-pain/Pages/Introduction.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Back-pain/Pages/Introduction.aspx)

Remember that your pharmacist can also help you.

Easy read by [easy-read-online.co.uk](http://easy-read-online.co.uk)