



Self-care Information

Back Pain

Tips on how you can self manage back pain.

“Supporting you to look after you”

- Back pain, particularly lower back pain, is very common.
- It usually improves within a few weeks but can sometimes last longer or keep coming back.
- Your local community pharmacy can help with advice about pain relief.
- Try to stay as active as possible and continue your daily activities.
- Staying positive tends to help you recover quicker.

Your local community pharmacy can help with back pain

- Pain killers such as **ibuprofen** and **paracetamol** are effective in most cases.
- You can take **ibuprofen** tablets or use a “rub-on” (topical) version, but do not use them together.
- **Paracetamol** is not very effective on its own for back pain, but it may be used with ibuprofen.
- **Ask your pharmacist which treatment is best for you or the person you care for.**
- **Ask your pharmacist which treatment to buy if you are buying treatment for a child or if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.**

Did you know?

It is safe to take ibuprofen with paracetamol if needed.



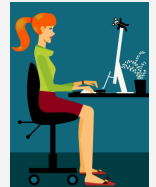
Let your pharmacist know if you take any other medicines, or if you are pregnant or breastfeeding, as this may affect which treatments you can use safely.

Hot or Cold compression packs may work for short-term relief

- Use an ice pack (or bag of frozen peas) wrapped in a tea towel to reduce pain and swelling.
- Use a heat pack (or hot water bottle) wrapped in a tea towel to relieve joint stiffness or muscle spasms.

You could try

- ✓ **Keep moving** - try to stay as active as possible and continue your daily activities. This is one of the most important things that you can do. Resting or lying down for long periods can make the pain worse.
- ✓ **Exercises and stretches** for back pain - other activities such as walking, swimming, yoga and Pilates may also be helpful.
- ✓ **Stay active** - when your back is feeling better, doing regular exercise can help keep your back strong; adults are advised to do 150 minutes of exercise a week.
- ✓ **Take care when lifting** - Lift close to your body, bend your knees instead of your back, and try to avoid lifting heavy items .
- ✓ **Use good posture** - check your posture when sitting, using computers and watching television .
- ✓ **Lose weight** (if you are overweight) - being overweight increases your risk of back pain.



See your GP or call 111 if:

- the pain doesn't start to improve within a few weeks.
- the pain stops you doing your day-to-day activities.
- the pain is very severe or gets worse over time.
- you are worried about the pain or are struggling to cope.

Ask for an urgent GP appointment or get help from 111 if you have back pain and:

- a high temperature (fever).
- you've lost weight without trying to.
- there's a lump or swelling in your back or your back has changed shape.
- the pain doesn't improve after resting or is worse at night.
- the pain is made worse when sneezing, coughing or pooing.
- the pain is coming from the top of your back (between your shoulders), rather than your lower back.

Call 999 or go to A&E if you have back pain and:

- pain, tingling, weakness or numbness in both legs.
- numbness or tingling around your genitals or buttocks.
- difficulty passing water (weeing).
- loss of bladder or bowel control (weeing or pooing yourself).
- chest pain.
- it started after a serious accident, such as a car accident.

Here are some useful links to further information

NHS Website	https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/back-pain/ Includes a video that shows some simple back stretches and links to more information.
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Or visit your local pharmacy for advice



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<https://notts.icb.nhs.uk/your-health/personalised-care-2/my-life-choices/>

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