

A colorful speech bubble graphic with a gradient from blue to red, containing the text 'Patient Information' in white.

**Patient  
Information**

# Back Pain

## What causes my pain?

The spine is a very strong structure made up of bones and discs held together by ligaments and muscles. Pain may arise from any of these tissues and may be felt in the back and, or the legs. An episode of back pain can be alarming due to the severity of the discomfort and, although it is painful, it is usually not serious. Most back pain will usually improve within two to six weeks.

## What can I do to help?

Regular pain relief is recommended, such as Paracetamol and Ibuprofen (anti-inflammatories). Check with your General Practitioner (GP) or pharmacist if you have not taken these medications before.

An ice pack such as a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a damp tea towel can be applied over the painful area (15 minutes every 2 hours) in the first week, if tolerated, and then it is better to use heat. Apply a heated wheat bag or hot water bottle for 15 minutes and ensure a two hour gap before re-application.

Positions for comfort are lying on your back (pillow under knees), lying on your stomach over a pillow if needed or lying on your side with a pillow between your knees.

## Keep mobile

Do not stay in one position for too long as the back will stiffen up. It is important to keep moving, even if it is only for short periods, such as short walks. Don't stop all activities of daily living, just modify them, instead of digging over a vegetable patch, do some pruning; instead of cleaning the whole house, clean one room.

## Keep working

Sitting is better if you sit upright with your back supported, try using a rolled towel in the small of your lower back, especially important when driving and avoid prolonged sitting especially on a low sofa or soft easy chair. Don't sit for longer than 30 minutes, get up and move around.

Keep working if possible; perhaps some modification to your job will be needed initially – heavy lifting will be painful, so light duties are preferable. Sitting at your desk all day may not be possible, perhaps work reduced hours or have more breaks to allow for a walk and a change of position.

## Exercises to do

Keep active. Regular exercise is so important, especially walking, cycling and swimming. Try the exercises below. These exercises should be performed slowly and completed in a controlled manner so you are not increasing the pain. Repeat each exercise 5-10 times, 2 - 3 times a day.

Lying on your back with your knees bent. As you breathe out flatten your back onto the bed / floor and pull your tummy button in to your spine. Breathe in and relax.



Lying on your back with your knees together and bent. Slowly roll your knees from side to side keeping your upper trunk still and tummy button pulled in towards your spine.

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Lying with your knees bent and feet on the floor. Lift your knees towards your chest. Place your hands behind both knees and draw them towards your chest. Hold for 5 seconds.



Lying on your back. Lift one leg towards your chest. Place your hands behind the knee. Gently pull your leg towards your chest. Feel the stretch behind your thigh. Hold for 5 seconds. Repeat to other leg.

Lying face down, leaning on your elbows / forearms. Gently bend both knees bringing your heels towards your bottom. Lower and relax.



Stand straight with feet apart. Support your back with your hands while bending your back as far backwards as possible. Keep your knees straight during the exercise.

Standing. Bend sideways at the waist.



Kneeling on all fours. Hollow your back. Keep your neck long and elbows straight. Follow this by arching your back.



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**Please retain this leaflet for future reference.**

**For further advice or information you can telephone your local Minor Injury Unit (MIU):**

## **Chippenham Community Hospital**

Rowden Hill

Chippenham

SN15 2AJ

Tel: 01249 456 403/4

Open: 07:00am to 23:00am; 7 days a week

## **Trowbridge Community Hospital**

Adcroft Street

Trowbridge

BA14 8PH

Tel: 01225 711 329

Open: 07:00am to 23:00am; 7 days a week

From 1st January 2019 smoking will not be permitted on any NHS site in England. Smoking will not be permitted within any of our buildings or anywhere outside on our sites. Smoking facilities will not be provided. Please be considerate of others when vaping in hospital grounds.

**This information sheet is available to order in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email [gwh.pals@nhs.net](mailto:gwh.pals@nhs.net)**

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